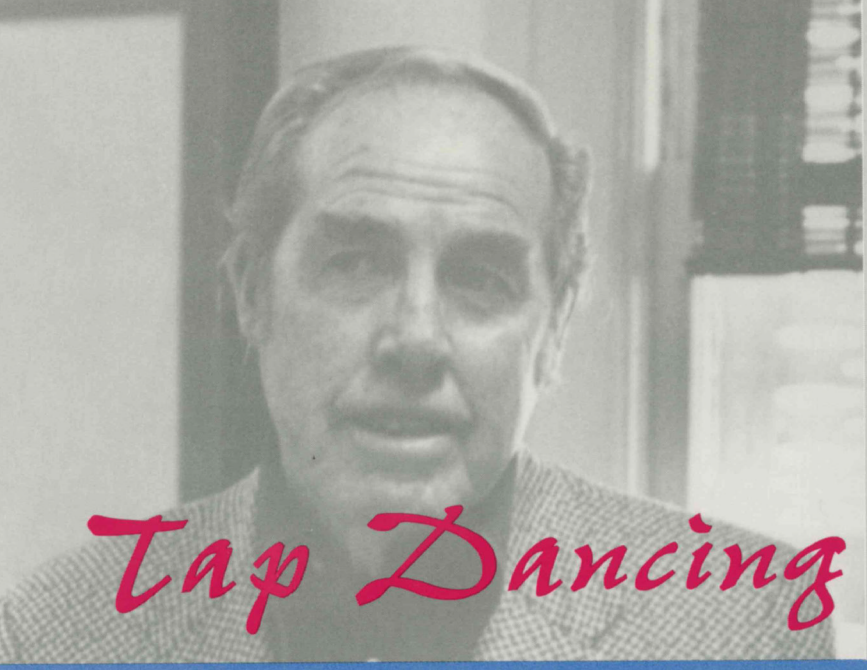
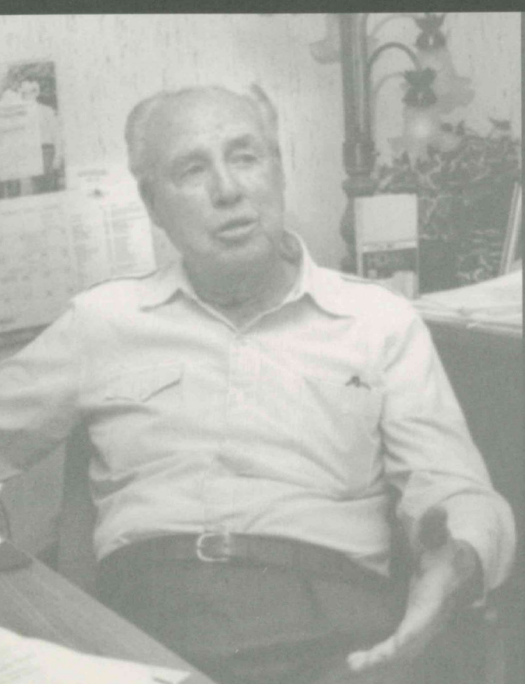
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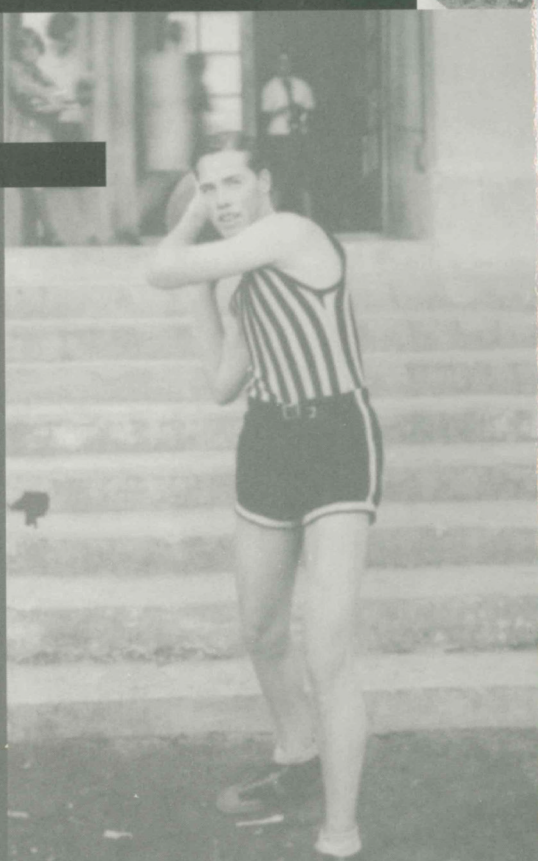
JACK DOUGLASS











Tap Dancing on Ice: The Life and Times of a Nevada Gaming Pioneer

Interviewee: Jack Douglass
Interviewed: 1993-1996
Published: 1996
Interviewer: William A. Douglass
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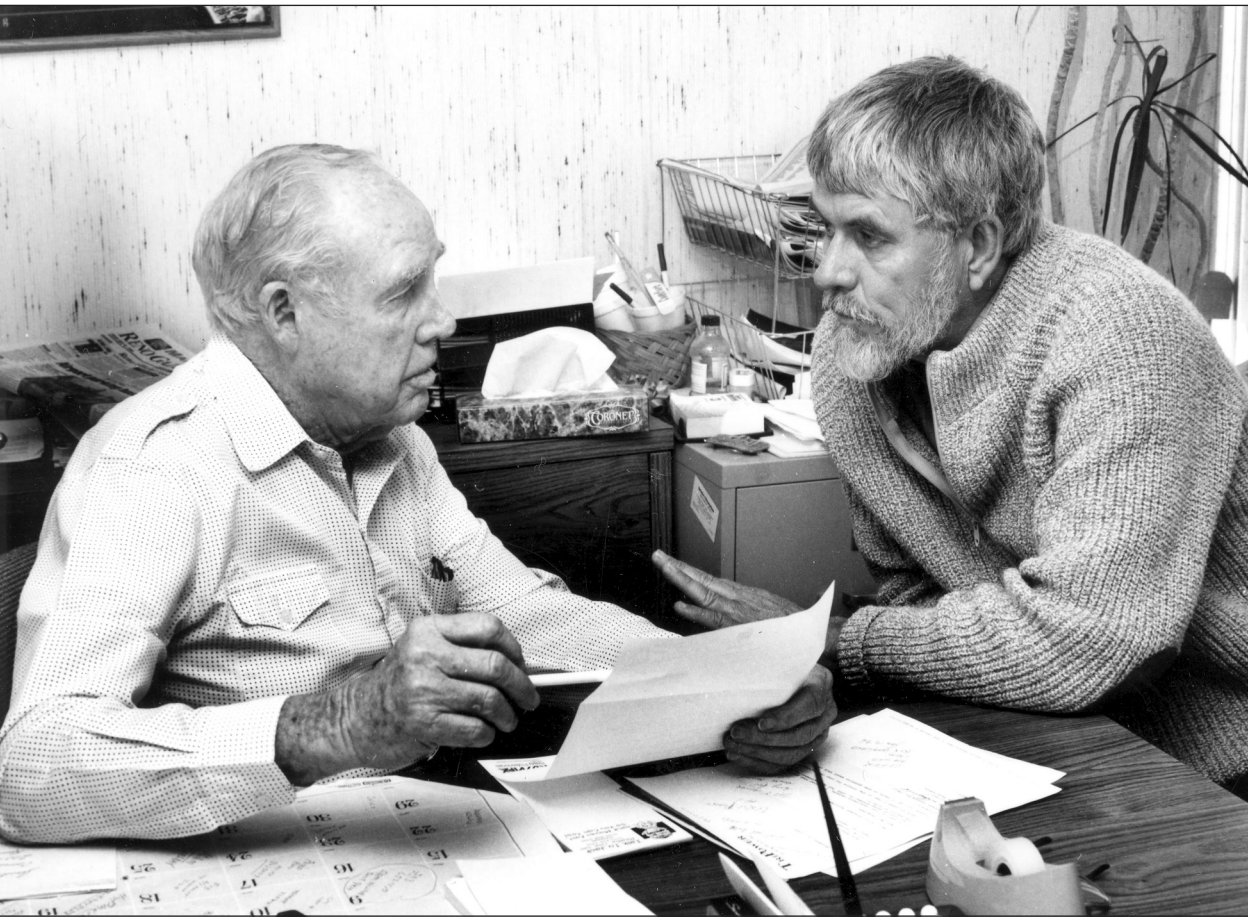
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Tap Dancing on Ice



"After a couple of stiff recording sessions we hit our stride as we entered into our most productive collaboration . . ." Jack (left) and William A. Douglass.

Tap Dancing on Ice

The Life and Times of a Nevada Gaming Pioneer

by Jack Douglass,
as told to William A. Douglass

University of Nevada
Oral History Program

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PREFACE

IN 1986 JACK DOUGLASS sold his interest in Reno's Club Cal-Neva, thereby closing a chapter in his life which spanned a quarter of a century. As his son (and business associate) I had some appreciation of his role as a pioneer of Nevada gaming, but it was fragmentary at best. Neither of my parents was given to reminiscing.

I did have my childhood memories of the Nevada Novelty Company, Jack's slot route operation headquartered on East Second Street. It was a few blocks from St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, which I attended. I would go to Nevada Novelty most afternoons and while away the time playing pinball or leafing through used 45 rpm records before we rode home together. On rare occasions Jack would take me on a trip to remote places in the Nevada desert, such as Flanigan, where I would help him hand-wrap the coins from the two or three slot machines and juke box that he had on location. It was all very natural to me, seemingly no more noteworthy than the occupations of my schoolmates' fathers.

While my three brothers all began their adult careers in gaming, I was the black sheep. It was not until 1980, or when I was already a fortyish professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, that my parents decided to gift me a small portion of their interest in Reno's Club Cal-Neva. As part of the investigation of

my background necessary to get me a gaming license, Father and I went to Carson City to meet with Jack Stratton, an official of the Nevada Gaming Control Board. In our discussion Stratton casually mentioned that Jack held the oldest active gaming license in the state (which he still does).

During my years as a minor partner in the Cal-Neva I served on its board of directors, thereby gaining some insight into the workings of the gaming industry (and my father). At the time of the Cal-Neva sale I approached Jack with the idea of taping his recollections. Over the next year I mentioned it several times but, in retrospect, I now understand that it was a difficult period for him. Just moving his records and belongings out of his office of many years was traumatic. He was in his mid-seventies, but far from ready to retire. He was therefore adjusting to his new base of operation, in the office adjacent to that of my brother John, at that time the CEO of the Comstock Hotel and Casino. Jack always agreed that we should talk, but remained noncommittal as to when. I began to view my request as an imposition and his vague assent as a veiled refusal. I backed off.

In 1991 something happened which renewed my interest in Jack's story. That year my wife Jan and I decided to prepare a fragment of Douglass family history as a Christmas gift to my parents and children. Our focus was upon my grandfather, William ("Billy") James Douglass during the 1890s, or the years when he founded Douglass Camp (now a ghost town) in Esmeralda County. Working on the manuscript "Douglass Camp Days" inevitably turned my attention to early Tonopah, where Billy had settled in 1900 and made his real mark. It was there, in 1910, that Jack was born. The exercise reminded me of the earlier admonition of his sister, my Aunt Gladys. When I told her of my interest in writing Billy's biography one day she had replied, "Write about your father, his story is more important." I rebroached the topic with Jack and, in the afterglow of his pleasure over the Christmas gift, he agreed.

We both approached our first taping session with no small amount of trepidation. He had wanted to know in advance what we would cover and was prepared with formal notes. For my

part, I was caught up in the ironic anomaly of my dual filial and inquisitorial roles. As a social anthropologist I had spent my entire career interviewing elderly informants in various parts of the globe. I had even published the biographical account of a Nevada Basque sheep rancher[1] and had conducted an oral history with a prominent northern Nevada Italian for UNR's Oral History Program.[2] However, at this particular moment of truth, professional experience seemed to count for little. I was reminded of the astonishment of the family members of my elderly interviewees upon being presented with their stories, many of which they had never heard before. There seems to be a power inherent in the role of the sympathetic outsider when it comes to eliciting private thoughts and inner worlds. What would Jack reveal? What would remain concealed?

It is for the reader to judge the quality of the information; however, for me the quality of the experience was both positive and remarkable. After a couple of stiff recording sessions we hit our stride as we entered into our most productive collaboration, whether as father and son or just two people. During these interviews we laughed a whole lot together, and they were the only times that I ever saw him cry.

If the taping was just plain enjoyable, my dilemma was scarcely over. I had to edit the transcripts, which were, of course, largely in the second person, i.e. a father recounting things to his son. At times this influenced the questions asked and the answers elicited. However, normally life stories are narrated either in the unadulterated first person (autobiography) or the third (biography). I attempted both approaches and found them wanting. Framing the text exclusively in the first person gave it too much of a "big-I" flavor—it also obfuscated the fact that what comes across as self praise was often more a function of my questions and follow-up than Jack's critical choices. The third-person voice was even less satisfying to me, since in referring to my father as "Jack," "he," "his" and "him" there was a distancing effect that proved intolerable for a son.

I have therefore opted for what I would call the "adulterated first person" voice. By this I mean that Jack's story is told in his

own words but without losing sight of the presence of the interviewer/son. When, for example, he chooses to emphasize a point as a father to a son the flavor is retained, e.g. "Your mother and I . . . . "

Finally, I would note that the present publication is the result of a private exercise. It was not our original intent to produce and publish a text at all. In fact it was conceived as an extension of "Douglass Camp Days." However, midway through our taping Mead Dixon's oral history *Playing the Cards That are Dealt*[3] came out, and I realized the importance of Jack's story to Nevada's history—particularly to an understanding of the origin and evolution of its gaming industry. I therefore approached Tom King, director of the University of Nevada, Reno's Oral History Program, and Ken Adams, its Gaming Series editor, with the possibility of preparing this text. They were gracious and supportive. The present account differs somewhat from the manuscript "Jack's Story: The Life and Times of Jack Douglass, Nevada Gaming Pioneer" that is now a part of the permanent collection of the Oral History Program. The latter contains more family history material, as well as Jack's experiences and views regarding matters that are tangential to the present story line—the main highlights of his life as a Nevada gaming figure.

WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS
University of Nevada, Reno

INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY OF GAMING in Nevada is an oft-told tale. Its theme is the Las Vegas story with Bugsy Siegel as its foundational character. It is a narrative about outsiders, and it is narrated by other (usually unsympathetic) outsiders.[1] In its most sensationalized guise it produces best-selling novels which lead to blockbuster films such as *The Godfather* cycle, *Bugsy* and *Casino*. Their cumulative effect is to make Las Vegas one of the few places on the planet that enjoys instant name recognition almost anywhere.

The plot is one in which a small, economically depressed state legalizes (in 1931) gambling and quickly falls into the clutches of the Mafia. The American public, indeed the world, never seems to tire of the epic struggles between the hoods, the regulators, and multinational corporations contesting control of billions of dollars in gaming revenues.

To heighten the drama the players include such flamboyant and fascinating figures as Howard Hughes, Steve Wynn, Donald Trump, Kirk Kerkorian and Barron Hilton. Nor do these twentieth-century capitalist gladiators do battle solely in Nevada any longer. Gaming has spread in its many guises throughout America and beyond, and now poses monumental economic, social and political challenges to world society.

In its casino form the proliferation of gaming remains, to a significant degree, a Nevada initiative in the sense that it is still fueled mightily by Nevada capital and expertise. The rallying cry of gaming's opponents is the need to insulate their local community against "Las Vegas-style gambling." At the same time "Las Vegasing"[2] (ouch!) is one of the neologisms coined to describe cultural process in the contemporary world and *Learning from Las Vegas* is a canonical postmodernist text.[3] In this regard the conceptual influence of Las Vegas transcends the gaming industry *per se* and extends far beyond Nevada.

In short, the decision in 1931 by the Nevada state legislature to legalize casino gambling continues to reverberate around the globe as we approach the millennium. If anything, its implications and consequences loom larger at present than at any time since Phil Tobin, a cow-county legislator from Winnemucca, introduced his enabling bill.

In 1931 gambling had been technically illegal in the state since 1910, but it was nonetheless going on more or less openly at the margins of Nevada society. In Reno Bill Graham and Jim McKay operated the Bank Club in the basement of the Golden Hotel. The property was owned by George Wingfield, the banking magnate who was arguably the most powerful man in the state. Prior to 1910 Wingfield ran saloon gambling operations in Golconda and later in Tonopah.[4] With the quiet support of the Wingfield political machine Nevada liberalized both its gaming and divorce laws in the name of economic survival for the state in the Great Depression.[5] When Tobin and his colleagues rubbed the bottle, they had no notion of the power of its genie. The rest, as they say, is history.

However, like any oft-told tale, its more dramatic and spectacular aspects have acquired mythic proportions. In this regard proportion readily becomes distortion and narration is obfuscation. For there is an entirely different history of Nevada gaming that is all but ignored: the small-scale, local variety that was prominent from 1931 through the end of World War II—what might be called the "pre-Las Vegas" era of modern Nevada gaming history. The present account by Jack Douglass, a

Tonopah native who began his gaming career in the mid-1930s with a pinball/jukebox/slot-machine route in central Nevada mining camps, affords unique insight into this early period.

Jack went on to become a principal in several Reno, Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas casinos, and therefore possesses insider knowledge about the growth of the casino industry and some of its prominent players. But in this regard as well his story underscores the extent to which there was an "old Nevada" dimension (which continues) to the state's gaming history. For there is a sense in which the legalization of gaming was viewed as nothing more than a business opportunity by the residents of a state beset by economic crisis in its traditional mining and ranching industries. Neither was it farfetched in terms of the Nevada mentality. Arguably, Nevadans were well-acquainted with the importance of chance, luck, and fortune—whether in searching for elusive mineral wealth or pursuing agriculture in one of the nation's harshest environments. Nor were Nevadans, with their fetish for independence and self reliance, particularly concerned with their image. In the internal debates over legalizing prize fights, quickie divorces or gambling, the obvious drawback of becoming America's pariah state failed to carry the day.

Jack's story is that of a gaming entrepreneur who used the resources, largely human, at his disposal as a prime element in his business success. His father's reputation as a respectable central Nevada mining figure (until his death in 1929) opened many doors. As Jack sought "locations" in which to put his equipment, being Billy Douglass's son was both an excellent reference and instant credential. Simply being a Tonopah native had its own significance. As a *Fortune* magazine article, published in 1934, stated, "Everybody who ever was anybody in Nevada came from Tonopah."[6] (Reference is to the dominance of the Tonopah-Goldfield area in Nevada affairs during the first decade of the twentieth century and the subsequent dispersal of their key players when the mining boom went bust—mainly to the Reno-Carson City area.) Whether forging friendships during his brief stay at the University of Nevada, seeking to expand his

route from Tonopah to Reno or making casino deals in the Reno market, Jack's business relations intersected constantly with his kinship ties and longstanding friendships, most of them grounded in his Tonopah upbringing. He hired his brothers, cousins, and fellow schoolmates, and formed a partnership with John Cavanaugh, another Tonopah native, to develop real estate and the Club Cal-Neva casino project in the Reno area. Thus, while Jack has seldom returned to Tonopah over the past fifty years, even for a visit, he has never fully transcended his Tonopah origins.

In sum, the following account is a cameo that portrays a different Nevada gaming history—its homegrown variety. While not necessarily the stuff out of which to fashion Hollywood epics, it is nevertheless essential to a full understanding of the state and its people.

WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS
University of Nevada, Reno

Chapter One

TONOPAH BEGINNING

MY FATHER, BILLY DOUGLASS, was a mining man. He was born on the Comstock Lode. I know that as a young man, while still in his teens, he herded sheep and delivered milk for the Dangbergs in Carson Valley. Somehow Father ended up in Candelaria, probably before he was twenty. There he worked as a clerk in the Givens and Ingalls store and then became an apprentice assayer in the Northern Belle Mine. After a few years he was head assayer and he attracted the attention of Superintendent W. H. Shockley, the most important man in town. My father became Shockley's protégé; he even lived in the boss's home for a while. When Shockley became superintendent of the Mount Diablo Mine he made my father his general manager. By then Father was in his mid-twenties and he was ready to take a bride. He married Mary McQuillan from Virginia City. It was really tragic, since she died of an illness right after they returned from their honeymoon in San Francisco.

In 1893 there was a big depression and the price of silver collapsed. The Mount Diablo Mine closed down in the crisis, so Father went prospecting for gold with some friends. I guess the price of gold held up. Anyway, they were lucky and discovered a good prospect. They founded Douglass Camp which, in the 1890s, was one of the better little mining towns in Central

Nevada. One of father's partners was Dan Robb, his brother-in-law. Dan was married to Annie McQuillan, Mary's older sister.

I know that Father made some money out of Douglass Camp. He set up the first mill there. Then he remarried, and his new bride, your grandmother, was Kate McQuillan—Mary's younger sister. So the Robbs, McQuillans and Douglasses were all related by marriage.

In 1900 the big news in the area was the discovery of gold and silver at Tonopah. By then Father was an accomplished mining man, and when he heard about Tonopah he struck out across the desert in a buckboard. He used to say that he was the fifth man into the camp. He became a leaser on one of the Jim Butler claims and made quite a bit of money. He also worked as an assayer and was involved in setting up the first mill in Tonopah.

I was born in Tonopah in 1910, and my first real memories are of living on Edwards Street. Douglass Street was right behind us. Later they changed its name—I don't know why. My aunt Maggie Money, Father's sister, lived in a rather large house behind ours. Next door we owned a little two-room cabin. My cousin, Norman Money, was quite a bit older than I,[1] and he lived there for a while with his wife Celia. He was a macho kind of guy. There was a covered swimming pool down by the Victor Mine, and Norman worked there as a lifeguard. He taught me how to swim.

The next house over belonged to Uncle Jim McQuillan and Aunt Katie. Her maiden name was Hamilton and her mother lived with them until she died. Their eldest son was Leloyd; he was nineteen years older than I. He died as a young man, so I don't remember much about him. He had a sister Mary,[2] who later married a pharmacist, Charlie Riley. Charlie's brother Bob is your godfather. Mary's little brother was Leroy. Roy was just three years older than I. He was "Cousin Roy." He was the center on the Tonopah High basketball team and I kind of idolized him.

My Uncle Jim McQuillan was the postmaster in Tonopah for many, many years. Before that he was in the mining business,

buying and selling claims. He was a gentleman type of guy, always dressed up. Later they moved to a larger house behind Tonopah High School.

Uncle Dan and Aunt Annie Robb lived across the street. Uncle Dan had a blacksmith shop down by the depot. He was a strong, beautiful man[3] who must have been in his seventies when I first remember him. (Seventy was a lot older in those days than it is today.) If my mother had a letter to mail she'd give it to me and say "Take it down to your Uncle Dan and he'll put it on the train." He would go with me to the station and lift me up so I could reach the slot on the mail car. It was a great event. I also used to hang around the shop to see what he was doing. He was very kind and patient with me.

There were five Robb children. Ray was the oldest, then Muriel, Blanche, Thurman and Ethel. They were all older than I.[4] Ethel was the youngest, and she was a year or two younger than my sister Gladys. I would go in and out of their house like it was my own. I would just walk in the front door and ask, "You got any cheese?" I loved to eat cheese. They kept chickens, and one day my friend Milo Banovich and I needed money to go to the show. I said "Well, we could steal some eggs and then sell them." Ethel overheard that and ran us off.

My grandparents lived about three doors down the street. My father built them that house. They were both born in Ireland. Grandfather Bernard McQuillan was tall and slender, and he had a white goatee. I thought he was kind of a mean man. He had this cellar where he kept potatoes and things, and we kids used to like to play in it. I guess he chased us off a few times.

I used to go see my Grandmother McQuillan quite often because she was a good cook. Her first name was Bridget and her maiden name was Murphy. I would walk into her house and say "I'll get the cookies, grandma." She would say "No, I'll get them later." If I tried to take one she could tell. I was always struck by that because she was supposed to be blind. I guess she could see a little bit, maybe light and dark. After she died[5] the family moved grandpa in with Uncle Dan and Aunt Annie because he was just too feeble to take care of himself. He had a

room there and they brought him his meals until he passed away.[6]

All of my life I have been close to the Robbs. Blanche never married and she lived in Carson City. She was the secretary to many of Nevada's secretaries of state. We used to visit her a lot. My father gave her the house that he had built for Bernard and Bridget. He must have known that Blanche wouldn't marry and might need it.

I also had an Uncle Jack McQuillan, but he lived downtown on Main Street. He had a kind of apartment complex, rented out rooms and a store downstairs. He married Rose Goetz. I think she was a Jewish lady—very attractive and pleasant. She had a brother Hymie; he worked for Uncle Jack. Jack and Rose had an only son, Jack, who was one month younger than I.

On Saturdays Milo Banovich and I would go see my cousin Jack. The McQuillans were rich; they had a couple of nice automobiles. Cousin Jack was educated at home, he never went to school. He had the best toys in town, so Milo and I would go there to play with him—and probably break his toys!

Uncle Jack made a lot of money investing in mining stocks. His attorney was Hugh Brown, a famous lawyer in Tonopah. Hugh Brown advised Uncle Jack to invest in a bank in Bishop, and then Los Angeles grabbed the water rights in the Owens Valley and all those ranchers started going broke. The bank failed and Uncle Jack lost his investment, $75,000, which was like a million dollars today.

Hugh Brown got into a big lawsuit against Los Angeles and the bank, but nothing came of it. When Brown left Tonopah I guess he felt so bad for Uncle Jack he just gave him his house up by the high school. The McQuillans moved there. Ray Robb was on the school board by then, and he got Uncle Jack the janitorial concession. I think it paid about $600 a month, but you had to hire your help out of that. So both my uncle and Cousin Jack worked there as janitors.

Gladys, my sister, was nine years my senior. I have no idea where she got that name. She was quite a young lady when I first remember her. She was away at school a lot—Notre Dame

boarding school in the San Francisco Bay Area. One of her friends there was Liliuokalani, the last Hawaiian princess. Gladys later attended the University of Nevada.

After Gladys came Belmont. His full name was Bernard Belmont—Bernard for Grandfather McQuillan and Belmont for either the name of the town that Jim Butler and Tasker Oddie (Tonopah's founders) came from or for the Tonopah-Belmont Mine. The mine had just been discovered when Belmont was born, and everyone was excited about it. We all called my brother "Bud." He was six years older than I, so we didn't have a whole lot in common while I was growing up.

My parents sent Bud to the Belmont Military Academy in Belmont, California. He looked very fine in his uniform. It was a good school and a lot of San Francisco's finest attended. Bud met the Pullman heirs there. But then, after one year, he refused to go back. He would have been a sophomore or junior in high school, but he wanted to quit school altogether and go to work. He got into a big argument with Father and threatened to run away from home. Father owned a quarter of the New Midway Mine, so he got Bud a job there as a hoist engineer. He ran the cage that moved the men and the ore carts up and down the shaft. I remember being very impressed, because Belmont was running the biggest machine that I had ever seen.

Everyone knew my father as "Billy," except for his family—my mother called him "Will" and my cousins always called him "Uncle Will." My brother William Leland Douglass was named after Father, just like you were. (I don't know where the Leland came from.) Lee was my closest brother, just four years my senior. We used to wash the dishes together. He'd wash, I'd dry, and he would ask me about my life. He was a great marbles player. He won lots of agates, which were the valuable ones, and he used to give me some. Playing marbles was my first gambling game, and Lee was excellent at it.

Lee quit without finishing high school. He loved automobiles, and he went to work driving a delivery wagon for Coleman's Grocery. Everyone loved Lee. He was six feet one, which was tall in those days. Dave Coleman had never married,

and he wanted Lee to take over his store one day. I would go down there and help out on Saturdays, and Lee would give me candy.

Lee had a good friend, Albert Winzel, who was from a German family. Albert worked for the Standard Oil Company delivering gasoline and heating oil. They had some big storage tanks, and part of Albert's job was to check them. One day he climbed up on a tank and took the cover off. The fumes got to him, and he fell in and was killed.

They held a big funeral, and Lee was a pallbearer. Even though it was February, and bitter cold, he wore a suit and tie but no overcoat, and he stood outdoors like that for a long time. We had a coal stove in the living room, and when Lee came home he stood behind it, right between the stove and the wall. It was the hottest place in the house, but he couldn't get warm. He was just shaking and his teeth were chattering. He normally slept in the former chauffeur's garage, next to the house, but mother made him a hot water bottle and put him to bed right there in the living room.

Lee lost consciousness, went into a coma and then became delirious. He started raving; he was saying all kinds of gobbledy gook: "Fill the grocery bag!" Father brought three of the best doctors to see him. They had a conference in the living room. They thought it might be some kind of spinal meningitis, but they weren't sure. And the women in the family—Aunt Annie, Aunt Maggie, Aunt Kate—were in and out all the time. Everybody was very upset; my mother was beside herself.

All that week I stayed home from school to take care of Lee. I put cold packs on his head and tried to talk to him, but he just kept raging. Lee died just like that. We buried him eight days after he was Albert's pallbearer. He was nineteen years old. I don't even have a photograph of him.

I came next after Lee. I was born December 13, 1910. I was called Jack after my Uncle Jack McQuillan. They say that "Jack" is a nickname for "John," but I never remember being John. Every document that I have ever seen just lists me as Jack. My middle name was Raymond after Ray Robb, my godfather.

Then there was my little brother, Bob. He was three years younger and was named for Bob Stewart, a great friend of the family in Sodaville. Bob was born on March 17, St. Pat's Day, so that's where he got his middle name, Patrick. We were an Irish-Catholic family.

I thought my mother spoiled Bobby, and I always beefed a lot about him. He was kind of my shadow. We used to sleep in the same bed until he was seven years old and sometimes he would wet me. I told my mother, "Why don't you housebreak that kid?" Well, maybe not those exact words. My friends and I would go to the dumps to look for bottles, cans and scrap metal to sell to the junkman for a few cents, and Mother always made me take Bobby along. Milo Banovich also had to bring along his brother Nick, who was about Bob's age, and Milo and I didn't like that. (Before we had the railroad, Tonopah was serviced by wagons from Sodaville where the railroad ended. After the rails came to town a lot of that old wagon equipment ended up at the dumps. We would go looking for scrap, and sometimes we were lucky.)

So that's where I grew up. I think the Robbs and McQuillans followed Father's lead in coming to Tonopah. We had this close little circle on Edwards Street, and at Christmas and Thanksgiving we would all have dinner together at our house.

Milo Banovich was my first friend. He was a very dark Serbian kid. Milo lived about five or six doors down the block from us. I remember walking one day about half a block from our house, and there he was with a turned-down hat, looking at me. I stared back, and from that time we were friends. I couldn't have been more than five, and he was maybe eight months older. We started first grade together and were classmates until we graduated from Tonopah High.

There was a large Serbian community in town, but I don't think Milo was born in Tonopah. He came from Delamar down in southern Nevada. Evidently his father had been in the mining business there. Mrs. Banovich didn't speak very good English. Maybe George Banovich came over here and sent for her as a

bride, or he might have gone back to Serbia for her. He spoke good English.

God, I lived at the Banoviches'! They always favored me. Every Serbian holiday I had dinner there, and Milo would come for Christmas and Thanksgiving at our house. Lots of Serbians used to gather at the Banoviches'. I don't know what Mr. Banovich did, something to do with mining I guess . . . or maybe he worked in one of the Serbian grocery stores. I never saw him in work clothes—he always seemed to have a suit on. My father knew and liked him.

Another Serbian friend of mine was Oly Glusovich, who must have come to Tonopah later—I don't remember just when we met. His mother and father were dead, so Oly and his sister lived with their uncle, who had a pool hall and a small lunch counter on Main Street. They lived in a little, one-bedroom house a few doors down the street. Olga was younger than the rest of us, and she didn't have many friends. She did the cooking, the dishes, kept the house.

My father was the superintendent of the Midway Mine. There was an Old Midway and a New Midway. The Old Midway ran out of ore and I can barely remember it in operation. Then I guess they turned it over to leasers[7] for a while. When I was four or five Father would sometimes take me with him to the office. Ed Erickson was the bookkeeper and Tony Fredericks was the foreman.

At one time we were in the chips. Before I was born my father bought a Thomas Flyer automobile. It was one of the first cars in Tonopah, and it was a very fancy and expensive car in those days. If a Ford cost five hundred dollars, a Thomas Flyer cost four thousand. Father didn't drive, so we had a chauffeur. We had to build a chauffeur's quarters and garage behind the house. We also had a buggy with a very fancy two-horse team.

The Thomas Flyer didn't last very long because Father kept sending it out with prospectors he was grubstaking. He'd give them about $125 worth of bacon, potatoes, beans, blasting powder and caps, tools, et cetera. They'd go looking for prospects, and if they found something Father would get a half

interest in the claim. Before automobiles they used jackasses, but then along came the Thomas Flyer. There were few roads and Father would send the chauffeur out cross-country. The Thomas Flyer just couldn't take it. It was in the shop more than on the road. It would break down out in the country and Father would send out a team of horses to bring it back.

After the first one was ruined Father bought another Thomas Flyer. That was before my recollection, too. I remember having Chevrolet Baby Grands, several of them. By then we didn't have a chauffeur and Bud was the family driver.

My mother had help; we had a nanny named Sarah. She did the washing, prepared the meals, took care of us kids. She left when I was four or five. Then we had Lillian. She was a young Indian girl who came to us from the Indian Colony school outside of Carson. She was very educated and refined. She wore a white uniform. She helped the Robbs, too. We all loved Lillian. She was with us for several years. I don't know what ever happened to her. Maybe she got married or went back to school.

There were quite a few Indians around Tonopah. They scarcely spoke English. When they did it was kind of pidgin. There were maybe thirty or forty Indians living in wickiups down by the dump. The women would sit in groups on Main Street wrapped in bright blankets and talking softly to one another. They never begged; they just talked to each other. Sometimes they would come around looking for work. They would ask to do washing. If you had some you handed it over and they did it outside in your yard. They never came inside.

My father was pretty friendly with the Indians. When he was superintending a mine in Manhattan he had an Indian working for him as a wagon driver. In those days the Indians got their English names from whites, so Father called him Wagon Johnny. One day he came to father and said, "Wagon Johnny want take squaw. OK with you?"

"Where's the squaw? Bring her to me." Father asked her if she wanted to live with Wagon Johnny. She said yes. "What's your name?" She wasn't sure. So Father said, "Your name's

gonna be Nellie Buggy. You're now married." Maybe he gave them a dollar.

A couple of years later they came to Father and said "We have papoose." They showed him their little boy and asked him for a name. My father called him Willie Cart![8]

Father gave his own name to a Chinese who worked for him in Sodaville. I don't know what his Chinese name was, but he became Billy Ford. Then Father and Tom Kendall helped Billy bring over a mail-order bride from China. They paid for a big wedding.

The Fords had a beautiful son and daughter. They went to school with me. They were brilliant and talented. Billy worked for Father in some capacity. Every Chinese New Year they would dress up in costume and come to our house with presents.

The Chinese had a really tough time in the mining camps. First they were brought here to put the railroad through the Sierra Nevadas because the white guys couldn't hang from the cliffs and drill that rock. When that job was over the uneducated white man feared that the heathen Chinaman would take his job.

In Goldfield they passed an ordinance, maybe in 1905 or 1906, saying "No Chinese allowed within the city limits of Goldfield." I heard they expelled a couple of Chinese from there and they died in the desert. My father was big in the Elks, an officer or something, and one year the Goldfield Elks had a big parade. Father dressed up as a Chinaman and got booed. I don't know if he was serious or just poking fun.[9]

I don't remember all of my father's businesses. He had a mine over in Santa Rosa, California. I think he was involved at one time in moving freight to Tonopah with twenty-mule teams. He did some business with Borax Smith of Death Valley fame. Smith had interests near Mina, too. Chris Zabriskie was the head of the Borax Company. He was a little bit younger than Father, but they were great friends.[10] The Borax Company, with its Twenty Mule Team Borax soap, became very big. Every market in those days carried it. Borax soap was for washing clothes, not for toiletry.

Father was quite close to Tom Kendall; they had been in business together in Sodaville. Tom owned the Tonopah Club, a restaurant and saloon that was the big club in Tonopah. It was all mirrored and had small tiles on the floor. It was in the Kendall Building, which was two stories and brick—very imposing for Tonopah. I think Tom dabbled in stocks. He was a duded-up sort of guy, always with a white, starched collar and a tie and coat. He was dark-complected, handsome. Evidently, he was a gambler. I think he was a dealer. He had to be a gambler because it was in Tom Kendall's saloon that George Wingfield made his first stake in gambling—in a poker game.

Tom Kendall was at our house quite often. He would come up for bull sessions and Uncle Dan Robb would come over. I don't know whether Tom Kendall borrowed money from my father or what, but they were very close. Tom was married to a beautiful young woman, and she was a good friend of Muriel's, the oldest Robb girl.

My father knew Cal Brougher, Wilse's brother, very well. Wilse was one of the original founders of Tonopah. My mother was best friends with Cal's wife Elsie. Elsie was maybe forty years younger than Cal, probably his second wife. She was kind of a playgirl, his centerpiece. Cal lived in California, but he came to Tonopah after the strike. He evidently had money, or a line on money, because he got in early and made a lot of investments.

My father didn't have an education, but he had a reputation as sort of a mining engineer. He seemed to know about veins, how you could follow them and where they would leave off—the formation of the ground. So Cal Brougher would come to him with this and that. I think they were in two or three deals together. I know that Brougher was Father's partner in the New Midway Mine.

Cal owned or controlled the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad at one time. Elsie would come to town with her own Pullman car and she would always call on my mother. Mother must have been twenty years older than Elsie Brougher. She would say "Elsie can tell the engineer to stop any place she wants and pick flowers."

The Broughers had a lot of property at Lake Tahoe, and Elsie had her own speedboat, the *Elsie B.* She always wanted Mother to come for a ride on her boat, but she never did. When my sister Gladys first attended Notre Dame College she stayed with the Broughers at their Oakland estate. Cal Brougher got my father to buy some land near his. Father considered building a house there. Ben Edwards was investing around there as well. I don't know if they all got together in other California investments.[11] At one time we owned a house on the beach in Bird Rock, near San Diego. I remember spending one summer there, but my mother didn't like it much. It was isolated. I guess my parents just couldn't bring themselves to leave Tonopah.

Father owned half of the Nay ranch near Cloverdale about twenty miles north of town at one time. John Nay was a John Wayne type. He was a big, strong cowboy. He would take a horse up in the hills and be gone for four or five days looking for stray cattle. We kids would go out to the ranch in the summer for a month or six weeks.

One day I was playing in the yard and Jack Longstreet[12] came riding in. He had a nearby ranch. I had heard about Jack Longstreet for many years. One of the things I knew about him was that when he was a young kid he rode with a bunch of rustlers. When they caught them they hung everyone except Jack, because of his youth. They clipped his ear, cut a V out of it, and said that if they ever caught him rustling again he was dead.

So here comes this old man with long white hair, riding up on his horse. He had a pillow shoved up under his arm. He got off and sat on the same bench with me under a tree next to the well. I asked about the pillow and he said that his arm was sore because he had been shot there. Whenever he rode it hurt, but the pillow helped some. I then said something about his long hair. He replied "Well, kid, if you had something like this you would wear your hair long too." He brushed it back and showed me his ear. He was nice to me and we talked about horses for maybe fifteen or twenty minutes. He did most of the talking. I was impressed with that old man.

There was a huge table in the ranch house in a room off the kitchen. Upstairs there was a bedroom, living room and a parlor. The parlor had the first phonograph I ever saw. It was the old kind that worked with rubberized tubes to make the music. You had to crank it up and then engage the needle, which was attached directly to the gramophone horn. We used to play it a lot.

They had this magpie at the ranch. Somebody had split its tongue and it could talk. It would say "pretty bird" and "feed the bird." We had geese, and there was a call we used to feed them. That magpie learned it and he would fly around and call the geese from one place to another. He would run them ragged. One hot summer's night the windows were open. We were eating dinner and that bird flew into the house and plopped right into the gravy bowl. He was stuck and splashed gravy all over. "Pretty bird!" John Nay told his wife, "If you don't get rid of that son-of-a-bitching bird I'm going to choke it to death myself!" A crazy bird.

My brother Bob and I might of hayed a little bit, I don't remember. We weren't like Tasker and Andrew Eason, John Nay's nephews. They stayed at the Marsh ranch. Tasker was my age and Andrew was Bobby's, so we had a nice time together. They knew how to pitch hay, ride horses and lasso a calf or cow, but Bobby and I were pretty tenderfooted, and we didn't really want to get to the head of the class either. I had hay fever in those days; haying would make my eyes run. We stopped going to the ranch when I was a freshman in high school. I don't really know what happened to my father's interest in it.

Lottie, John Nay's wife, started the first boarding house in Tonopah. Her maiden name was Lottie Stimler, and she was half Indian. I don't know how much education she had,[13] but she was a very smart woman. About 1920 or 1921 the Spanish flu killed a lot of people in the western United States, I don't know about the East. They closed the schools and people had to wear gauze masks when they went out. My parents sent us to the ranch and we spent the winter there. So Lottie Nay was like a second

mother to us. When she and her daughter Bernice came to town they would either stay at our house or with Billy Marsh.

Billy Marsh was a great friend of my father. He had a ranch about seven or eight miles over the hill from the Nay ranch, so we would go back and forth to the Marsh ranch. Billy Marsh and Lottie Nay's brother, Harry Stimler, found Goldfield. My father grubstaked them. Marsh and Stimler located the Grandpa claim. It was on one side of a hill, and that's where most of the early claims were. The other side was where most of the gold was! They did sell their claims for some money. I don't know what Father got out of it.[14] They were good friends for life—my father, Marsh and Stimler.

Harry Stimler was a good salesman. He dressed real fancy. He always wore a fine suit and a Stetson hat. He had a big ring. He went back to New York and sold stocks. He made a lot of deals in New York.

I had my first job when I was a freshman or sophomore in high school. Forest Lovelock and Warren Richardson had an automobile agency in Tonopah. They sold Fords and Dodges. They had a shipment of four Dodges coming to Las Vegas by rail and they needed drivers to bring them from there to Tonopah. They weren't broken in, so you had to drive under thirty-five miles an hour.

Forest hired my brother Belmont as a driver for five dollars plus expenses, and Belmont got me the same job. It was July when we started for Las Vegas. I had never been there. As we went further south it started getting so hot, it just sucked the air out of you. Tonopah was high in elevation and wasn't too bad in the summer. By the time we got to an auto court in Vegas I was pretty sick. There was no air conditioning in those days and Vegas was intolerable in the summer. We had no fan or anything, and I passed out. In the middle of the night Belmont woke up the proprietor and said, "My brother's real sick; I don't know what to do." The proprietor said, "Soak his sheets in the bathtub and wrap him up. When they dry out, do it again." So that's how I got through the night. Next day it was a long, hot ride

back to Tonopah, but what I remember was the thrill of driving that new Dodge automobile.

Another of my summer jobs was working at the Tonopah-Divide mine, about seven or eight miles outside of Tonopah towards Goldfield. It was part of the Brougher holdings, kind of a spin-off of the Midway mining group. My father was superintendent, and the Divide was about the best mine out there. Harry Stimler was selling its stock in New York. I think it was Stimler who told my father to have me go out and do some new assessment work at the Divide, dig some holes. Or maybe it was George Graham Rice—he was involved. He later wrote a book called *My Adventures With Your Money*!

It was kind of a hot air mine. I mean they wouldn't just dig a ditch; we actually went out and did assessment work on an outcropping. Bill Waters was foreman for my father at the Midway, and he was involved. He would point out the good-looking outcroppings. Then the promoters would say "Well, we got this man out in Nevada who knows his mining, and we're going to let you in on the ground floor when we find this new mine." And there was no law in those days. All you had to do was stake your claim and record it at the county courthouse and that was your mine, whether it was two feet deep or a thousand. I worked out there two summers, digging holes. I know I worked pretty hard at five dollars a day and it was a lot of money. But I wasn't a very good digger.

I dug holes another summer, too, post holes for the power company. Horace Johnson was a very important man in Tonopah. He was the head of the Tonopah Mining Company, the biggest one in town. They still had leasers when I was in high school, the only mine still open. I was going out with Carolyn Johnson, Horace's daughter. We were classmates. He might of got me that digging job with the power company to get me out of town. He didn't really like the idea of Carolyn and me.

There was no work in Tonopah, but there was a little boom in Round Mountain, about sixty miles north of Tonopah, and the Tonopah Mining Company started a mill there. One summer Horace Johnson gave Oly Glusovich and I a job there on the bull

gang. I think I was a junior in high school. While we were there we learned to play all kinds of card games because we shilled in the hotel where we were staying. It was run by a Serbian guy. The mill picked us up every morning and brought us back. We got five dollars a day. We played poker at night, and if we lost money the proprietor made up half of it because we got the game started.

In the winter of my junior year my uncle Jack, the janitor at the high school, hired Oly and I to stoke the coal furnace that heated the place. We worked two or three days a week for six dollars a month. He also hired Baptiste Fabbi and Nevio Rosa to do the same job the other days of the week. We would trade off. I was president of the junior class and was playing basketball, so I didn't have a lot of time to either study or work. Oly was pretty busy, too. So we told Fabbi and Rosa that we would play them cards, hearts, to see who had to shovel the others' coal. We won two months' worth of their time, so we got our money and they did the shoveling! They kept asking for a rematch, but we stopped playing.

My father never wanted his boys to go into mining. He thought it was a blind alley. And then there was the silicosis. We called that "miners' con" [miners' consumption]. He saw a lot of young men die. The rock in Tonopah was bad—the particles in the air would cut your lungs like glass. Father saw so many young, strong Bohunks come over and they would be dead in two or three years. I was too young to know what was going on, but I would hear my parents talking about it. When my brother Belmont left school my parents wouldn't let him go into the mine. Father got him that job as a hoist engineer. But I don't think Father would have objected to one of us going out and *finding* a mine.

The only time in my life I went down a mine was to the twelve-hundred-foot level of the Midway. Bill Waters, the foreman, took me down once. I remember that when Gladys would come home from California my father would take her and Ethel Robb and their friends from school down into the Midway at night for a picnic. They would dress up with southwester'

jackets—I guess there was dripping water down there in places. They had their carbide lamps. It was a big treat. They looked forward to it for weeks, and I would think "If only I could go . . . . "

I have never really had an interest in mining. My father told each of us, individually and collectively, to stay away from it. Even the adventure of looking for a mine never enticed me like it did my brother Bob. I had no feeling for rock. Mining is like gambling, only with mining you have to dig a hole someplace. I never liked that. I did that assessment work at the Divide. I worked at the mill at Round Mountain, pushing a wheel barrow, and it just didn't feel right. That summer I dug post holes for the power company near Alpine I made seven dollars a day, big money then. But my hands never fit around the shovel very well! I mean if you are smart, like Harry Stimler, why, you let the other guy dig the hole. And then you get somebody to buy it, but you retain an interest in it.

Now, I don't think Father ever had a pick and shovel in his hands for any length of time. He had a small pick that he carried in his belt once in a while to take rock samples. He'd knock a sample off a ledge and then break it up a little to examine it. And he was around mines all his life. I don't think he was an entrepreneur. He was more interested in what you could develop in mining itself. He had a sense of it. He knew values and formations pretty well. He was always talking about ore values and whether you could recover enough gold (gold was twenty dollars an ounce in those days) to make it worthwhile. But it wasn't just gold. He got interested in Gabbs early on, and that wasn't even for precious metal.[15] He understood that end of the mining business, too.

When I was in grammar school Tonopah seemed like a pretty prosperous place. It was much bigger than Las Vegas, and with more action too. The mines were working and the price of silver was fluctuating around a dollar an ounce. When it started down William Jennings Bryan ran for president, and one of his big promises was to fix the price of silver at one dollar an ounce.

But the people back East didn't want that, and it was said when Bryan lost that he was "crucified on a cross of silver."

By the time I was in high school silver was down to about fifty cents and some mines were shutting down, but there wasn't a real sense of crisis. We thought silver might go back up. And then there were the leasers. A miner might lease the rights to go into a closed mine, say to the fifteenth level, and work the ore body for himself. He kept about a third of what he found. A third went to the mine's owners and, maybe, the other third to the mill. The leasers kept the economy going while I was in high school, but then that started going down, too.

There really wasn't much to do in western towns like Tonopah. It was too dry and cold for farming. You might get a job on a ranch or in a store; but in a mining town, when the mining stops everything falls apart. In Nevada life was like dancing—tap dancing on ice! Anyway, I was too young to worry much about such things.

Basketball was the only game in town. Before I was a freshman we had our gangs. There was the West End Gang, the Florence Avenue Gang, the Mineral Street Gang, et cetera. We would hang out together and play each other in basketball on the school playgrounds.

When I became a freshman there was the Pirates—like a junior varsity basketball team. Ed Slavin was their coach. They were sophomores and we were freshmen. Chester Guyer was our coach. The coaches were junior or senior high school students themselves. We got to use the gym when the varsity didn't need it.

The first year I was a substitute and the second I made the Pirates. We came down to Reno to play the YMCA and Virginia City High. We also played the freshmen at Reno High and the orphans' home in Carson City. So to make the trip to Reno was a big deal. We stayed in the homes of people we played against, and they stayed with us when they came to Tonopah.

When I was a junior Ray Fredericks became a teacher and the basketball coach at Tonopah High. He was about eight or nine years older than I. He was serious and taught us the zone

defense, which was new at the time. I made the varsity and we had a pretty good team. We worked hard and our coach was dedicated. He said everyone had to be in bed by ten o'clock or you were off the team. And so we were slaves to Ray Fredericks, all because we thought he was this great guy who had played varsity for the University of Nevada.

When I was a junior we went to the state tournament and lost after the second or third game. There was only one division then, no A and B teams. But first you had to win in your district. We would all come to the University of Nevada for the tournament, and you had to win three days in a row to be the champion.

I played center, believe it or not. I was five eleven. Today I'd be a dwarf; we weren't quite so tall then. I was able to jump, and it was important in those days to get the tip off. My junior year Johnny Harrington was on the team, and he was six one, but I could outjump him. The scores were so low. When I was in the eighth grade or so, Tonopah High played Las Vegas in Tonopah and I think they tied at twelve all. So they played three more minutes and tied at thirteen. They played another overtime and were tied at seventeen—so they called the game off!

We had the advantage of playing in the Tonopah gym because of its low ceiling. Sparks had a hot team. They came through on their way to Las Vegas. They had defeated everybody—Reno, Carson. Procter Hug, Sr., was their coach and he had gone to high school in Tonopah. He was a big athlete at the University of Nevada about Gladys's time. So they came to town to clean our clock—Wayne Spencer and the whole bunch of them. They would run down the court, shoot, hit the ceiling and miss. We beat the hell out of them!

My senior year we went to Ely, to Panaca, and to Las Vegas. Las Vegas was no opposition at all. Panaca had some good teams in those days. Ely always had a pretty good team. Our fans would take us in their cars. That's how we travelled. Since there was no television a lot of grown-ups were basketball fans, particularly when we had a winning combination. That year we got to the state championship and one whole section of the crowd

was Tonopah. My God, they were going crazy. They were giving us money and this and that. We won the state championship[16] and I was picked as an all-state player. Oly Glusovich and Jimmy Ray were also all-state. Milo Banovich was on our team as well. It was the first time Tonopah had been state champion.

But then we made a bad bobble which took off some of the glisten. We had come down to Reno by train, because the roads were too rough and coach didn't want us tired out travelling by car. After the victory we went to a big dinner at Colombo's Restaurant to celebrate with all our hangers-on. Next night our girl friends were supposed to go home. There were five of us guys, I think John Cavanaugh was one of them. And then there were five girls, our girl friends—Carolyn Johnson was one and Margery Mullin, who later married John, was another. We had two cars and we took them to the train depot in Reno and saw them off. But then we got to thinking that we didn't want them to leave—not yet—so we drove real fast down to Sparks to take them off the train. I don't think we wanted to sleep with them or anything, we just wanted them to stay another night.

We went into the Pullman car and there were the girls. "Come on girls, we got two cars out in front and we're going to take you back to Reno." They giggled and insisted "Oh, we shouldn't." But then one said, "I will if you will," and they all got off. So there we were heading back to Reno—and now we're getting scared. We were staying at a fraternity house and we didn't know what to do with the girls. But then one of the guys said he had an older sister working at the Golden Hotel. We went there and she came out. And then she said "You boys did what?" We started to get a tongue-lashing. She took the girls in, put them up at the hotel and became their chaperone. I don't think we got to see them again. We had to turn our train tickets over to them, too. Next day we went back to Tonopah by car. The driver would hardly speak to us. Well, here were the returning heroes, but there was this coolness. "You jerks!" We were heroes, but we were assholes too! They finally gave us some parties back in Tonopah, but there was a certain coolness at the same time.

That was in March, and my father died at the end of April. He never came to my games. My mother never went either. I didn't expect them to come. He was a baseball player, and he loved to play baseball as a younger man. But my brother Belmont told me about the tournament. We didn't have a radio, but Milo Banovich was working as a reporter for the *Tonopah Times* and he had an assistant. Milo's assistant was at the game in Reno, and every quarter he would run out and call in the score to the *Times*. Belmont said, "I was sitting on the toilet and Dad came running in all excited. He lifted me up and shouted 'We won! we won!'" Dad started dancing around, so he knew somehow. Maybe all the time he had been following me, but he never said anything. That was the way it was between us.

My father was not someone that held himself aloof, but he was on another plane from me. I remember as a child I used to sleep with him once in a while in the front bedroom, when he and my mother were fighting. He would tell me stories and sing songs—"After the Ball Was Over." Once in a while he would say, "Go down to Southworth's and get me a sundae with black chocolate sauce and no nuts." It cost a quarter, and he would give me thirty cents so I could buy candy. I don't remember my brothers sharing in any of that, unless he sent them down at different times.

When I was about ten years old a circus went broke in Goldfield. They auctioned whatever they had to get some money. Father came back from it with a black Shetland pony with a long mane and all the trappings. He bought it for me. It was the most wonderful thing a boy could have, and I was real popular with my friends. So Father didn't seem distant, but he was never a buddy. He was not close, close, close like Mother. I could tell my mother anything, get in her lap, sob and cry, whatever. My father was away a lot prospecting and hunting. He had that mine in Santa Rosa.

When I was a child my parents socialized quite a bit. Father was active in the Elk's Club. I remember that on New Year's Eve my parents would dress up and go to a fancy ball at the Mizpah Hotel. Also we would go on some family trips. When I was about

ten or twelve there was the time that Bob and I spent the summer with our parents at our house on the beach in Bird Rock, California. Another time we went to San Jose for a while. We visited Belmont in the Bay Area when he was going to school there. My father had two or three broken legs in his life, and he used to go to Saint Francis Hospital in San Francisco for medical treatment, but we didn't go along.

Really, when we were in the chips my parents were pretty prominent socially. Everyone knew them. They were old Nevada, not like Horace Johnson, who was very prominent but kind of an outsider. My parents knew the Johnsons, but they didn't move in the same circles. Mr. Johnson worked for the Tonopah Mining Company, which was owned by Philadelphia interests. At first he was in charge of their mill at Millers, about fourteen miles from town; but by the time I was going out with Carolyn, the Johnson family lived in Tonopah and her father was in charge of the only working mine. Horace Johnson was a mining engineer and Mrs. Johnson was very cultured. Sometimes I would go to their house for dinner, not as often as I would have liked. Mrs. Johnson loved books and we would talk about them. I didn't know beans about books but I was a good talker!

I think it took only about two drinks for my father to get feeling good. He would go to the Cobweb, which was a fancy bar, and the Tonopah Club. There was a short cut between our house and the Robbs', and my mother would look out the kitchen window about when she expected him home. Many times I remember her saying "Go get your father! He's drinking again and he's staggering." I would hold his arm and say "C'mon, Pop," and he would always grumble and say "I'm all right. Don't do that." And quite often the taxi driver would bring him home inebriated. So I do know he would drink in the afternoons, and we would put him to bed. My mother would pull off his pants and shoes, and then he would say to me, "I can't understand your mother. She's back there washing clothes and ruining her hands. She's got all those diamonds. If I were her I'd soak them." And I would say "Hey, she does soak them when she's washing the clothes."

It seemed we were always pawning my mother's diamonds at Tasem's. It was an up and down deal. If we got some money we redeemed them. But then we just ran out of money as the mines closed down. Father was at the end of his work time. I know he borrowed on his insurance. He had something like $12,000 in insurance with New York Life, and it was a lot of money. But when he died it was worth a lot less—maybe $2,500.

Even after the Midway closed my father still got a check for $215 a month. I know because sometimes I would go pick it up from Ed Erickson, who was kind of a receiver. Then the last year, maybe when I was a junior, the checks stopped. There was no more money, so I guess Father just ran out of rope. He had no income when he died. He would still go down to the office until four or five months before his death. Maybe he had other things. He had a mineral collection that he had gathered over the years. In fact, it was displayed at the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco. It was a wonderful silver collection. And then after my father died, Belmont and mother accused Ed Erickson because the collection was gone. But I think my father was selling it off piecemeal.

Before my father died we didn't actually think of ourselves as poor, but we knew our money was tight. Every Sunday my mother would write out a check for five dollars and send me to Southworth's to cash it into half dollars. We'd put fifty cents in the church plate and the rest was supposed to last the week for any cash needs. Bobby and I would get the dime we wanted to go to the show. But nobody else had money either. We didn't have an automobile the last five years of my father's life. The Midway had a pickup, a Ford, and we could use that once in a while if we had to haul things. I did have a bicycle.

My father was a very generous man with people.[17] I know that he grubstaked hundreds of prospectors during his life. After his funeral a young man came to the house. He'd lost his parents as a boy. He said my father had given him a summer job and then encouraged him to go to school. Father had paid for his tuition and made it possible for him to get his education

somewhere in California. He just wanted to come to Tonopah to pay his last respects.

Another time there was a knock at our door and there was this little old man—I can't remember his name. He said, "I loved Billy Douglass. Here's something from me." And he gave my mother two stock certificates, one thousand shares each, for a mine at Round Mountain. He said, "I sold this mine to a big company and they're going to develop it. You can take these certificates down to a broker's office and cash them in now if you want. But I think it's going to be worth more money." He was a prospector, basically. That stock went up about another dollar and then it started to drop. I think mother sold it for four or five thousand. It was a real big help.

If the mines had stayed open in Tonopah, and the price of silver had stayed up, it would have been a different world. My brothers and I would have probably lived there, maybe worked in a grocery store or something like that, likely not in the mining end of it. Tonopah would have been a flourishing town. But it died right out from underneath us. And then my father died and the whole country went into the Depression later that same year.

Chapter Two

China Beckons

MY FATHER PASSED AWAY in the spring of 1929, and I graduated from high school in June. My brother Belmont and I were painting the house that summer and Doc Galvin, the chief of police, came by and told me I had a job at Tybo. It was a lead mine about sixty miles east of town towards Ely. There were no jobs around Tonopah, and I guess he figured that the family wasn't in too good a shape. So I worked at Tybo that summer and my mother went down to Oakland to stay with my sister Gladys and her husband Wesley.

At Tybo I was on the bull gang. They had a big mill there and we just did the dirty work—carried around steel and lumber. It was hard, physical labor, but I was young then. The stuff that came out of there was called "concentrate." One shovelful of it weighed about seventy-five pounds. It went by truck to Tonopah where they would unload it onto a freight car. My brother Belmont worked at that, and he would come home so beat up and dirty! That stuff would get into your lungs, too. Belmont later had problems with his breathing—he died of emphysema.

I was working in Tybo with a guy named Swede. We got paid at the end of the summer. My mother was living in Oakland and he had a sister in Roseville, so we decided to go to California. When we got to San Francisco I had about fifty-five

dollars in my pocket. My mother and I rented an apartment in the same building where Gladys and Wesley were living. Wes's mother, Hattie Staples, was the manager. It was a small place and we paid forty dollars a month.

I had been going out with Carolyn Johnson for the last three years of high school and was very stuck on her. Her parents didn't want her to attend the University of Nevada, so she registered at Berkeley. Actually, I think that was why I was there in Oakland. I thought I could get a job down there, go to school, and be close to Carolyn. But it was a spur of the moment thing. She thought maybe I could get into Berkeley, but I didn't have my school records with me. I had to have them, so I contacted Jack McCloskey in Tonopah. He was working at the *Bonanza* newspaper. I wrote, "Get my records even if you have to break into the school!" He got me some kind of records and sent them to me with a letter saying, "You couldn't even get into junior high with these!" I showed them to Carolyn and she said they were awful. There was no way I was going to be admitted. School was about to start, so my mother said, "You should go to the University of Nevada. I have some money and I want you to go."

So I came to Reno and got off the bus with my suitcase. I was looking for Jack Hill—he was a football hero and I knew him—but while I was walking along I ran into Bill Woodburn. I knew him from playing basketball. He was later a well-known attorney in Reno. When he found out that I was there to go to school, he said, "Come on up to the house, I want to buy your lunch." He meant the SAE fraternity house. So I went there and they were rushing me, but I didn't know it. They got me in a room and this doctor was shaking my hand and saying, "Oh, Jack, so glad to see you." Normally, these guys wouldn't have spoken to me on the street. And I'm thinking "Gosh, what a friendly group of people."

They took me for registration, and I said, "I want morning classes; I need to work in the afternoon." My mother was going to send me my room and board, but I had to earn my spending

money. So they fixed that up. I stayed at the SAE house for a couple of days. They put a pledge pin on me.

Well, then I went to class and ran into Jack Hill. He was my long-time friend who had moved from Tonopah to Sparks in his senior year. When he saw that pin, he said, "What is that? You have to be a Sigma Nu." Bob Merriman saw me at lunch. He said "Those guys grabbed you." Then I saw Newt Crumley and he said, "Ray Fredricks would die if he knew you were an SAE!" I didn't know what to do, but they said they would go with me to the SAE house to get my things. And that's how I became a Sigma Nu.

I tried to get a job, but couldn't seem to. So I went to class and helped the football team as a water boy, hanging up the uniforms. I shared a room with four other people, including Merriman, and paid fifty dollars a month room and board. I was a pledge, so every Monday night I had to work in the kitchen. I was on the coal brigade. I would bring the coal to Ma Wolf, the cook, for her kitchen stove. We had to wait on the tables, too.

Sigma Nu had great athletes like Walt Linnehan, Wally Rusk, Bill Gilmartin and Jake Lawlor. They wanted me because I was an all-state basketball player, so I had to go out for the freshman team, which I made. Merriman kind of took me under his wing. He was very nice; somewhat older for a student, maybe twenty-four. He was going with Marion Stone and they later got married.[1]

The Sigma Nu house was quite a place. Newton Crumley was a Sigma Nu. He was a year ahead of me, but I knew him from Tonopah. His mother, Lee, was a close friend of my mother. They had moved from Tonopah to Elko, where Newt's father had the Commercial Hotel. He made a lot of money. Newt was an only son, so he got whatever he wanted. He had a big Cadillac that he kept down at the Reno Garage. Whenever he needed his car he'd call them up and they'd deliver it!

Newt was the king of the hill until Lionel Jasper came to town. I think he was from Los Angeles, and he had a Cord automobile. You couldn't buy one, you had to inherit it! It was a fantastic automobile. Lionel became a Sigma Nu, but I don't

think he even lived at the house. He had an apartment and just came over for meals. Everybody wanted to be friends with Lionel because he had lots of new clothes that he kept giving away. He was a nice guy—rich, rich, rich.

One day I remember coming into the fraternity house and Crumley was standing on a chair in the front room. He had a bucket and was holding it up to the ceiling, as if there was a leak. He said, "Quick, go get a broom!" Then he said, "Put it against the bottom of the bucket while I get down off this chair." So I did and then Newt said "Thanks, I've got to go now. See you later." He left me standing there and I could hear the snickers in the next room. Finally, I had to let go and found out that that bucket did have some water in it.

At Sigma Nu I became the Rear Admiral of the Fleet. They had certain punishments if you got out of line. Paddling was one. You might get three whacks—boom, boom, boom. They had a big flat paddle for your backside. But tubbing was the worst punishment. One day I got in trouble for something and the board said, "Douglass you're not going to get paddled; next Monday night you're gonna be tubbed!"

They filled the bathtub two-thirds full of cold water, stripped you completely, and put you in. The executives held your arms and legs. And then they would push you under until the bubbles started to come up. I think I got tubbed three times—but I was always innocent!

I was just the rear admiral because they used to talk about the main admiral. He was in school before me. He was always missing class and didn't do his fraternity work. They tubbed him a lot. Then one time they were doing it and he put a capsule with red dye in his mouth. When they shoved him under he bit it and the water turned red. They thought they had killed him. They pulled him out and tried to revive him and he just started laughing. So then they did nearly drown him! Anyway, a year or two after me they stopped tubbing. They eased off on paddling, too.

Half way through the school year my mother moved back to Tonopah; her money was running out and she couldn't send

me anything. It was time for my initiation at Sigma Nu, and it cost fifty dollars to be initiated, so I had to tell them I couldn't go through with it—I didn't have the money. I left school for good after the spring semester.

It must have been that summer that I went to San Francisco with Johnny Harrington and Wayne Spencer. Harrington had worked at Coleman's Grocery Store with my brother Lee, and he was a senior on the basketball team when I was a junior. He had some money saved up and he had a car. I think we drove to Sparks and picked up Wayne. It was probably prearranged. I knew Wayne casually from when he played ball for Sparks, and then we were both Sigma Nus during my year at college. Johnny got a hotel room in San Francisco. I don't think he appreciated our moving in with him, but we didn't have money to pay hotel rates.

We were looking for jobs and I answered several ads. In one job they trained you to sell lots down near San Jose. They were worth $500 each, and I became a trainee. You had to go door to door, around six p.m., when both the husband and wife were home. They were raffling some lots and there were barrels in the supermarkets where you put your tickets. I had to make a presentation and get the couple to take the bus at a certain time to go see the lots and have a picnic. If they bought a lot and paid cash I got seventy-five dollars; fifty dollars if they paid monthly. So I got my list and went out. I had to get both signatures or the deal was no good. In four days I called on maybe eighteen couples and didn't sell one lot.

And then Johnny Harrington left us a note saying something like "The hotel's paid for today. Leaving for Oakland. See you there, maybe." That was the last I saw of him for about ten years. Neither Wayne nor I was doing any good. We might have had a few small jobs, but we decided we couldn't make it in San Francisco. We were down to a few dollars. We flipped a coin to decide if we would head north or south. It came up north. We went down to the Southern Pacific yards and started inquiring about trains north. A hobo told us that there was a flyer, supposedly a fast train, that was going to pass by a certain place

at seven p.m. We jumped on that train, but it didn't have freight cars, so the only place you could ride was in the envelope between the passenger cars, about three or four feet of space. We had to hide, and after awhile we were getting cold, tired and dirty. Around four a.m. it slowed down and we got off in this town. We didn't much like the north.

It turned out to be Klamath Falls, Oregon. There was nothing open at that hour, so we spent the rest of the night in a doorway. About six a.m. a light came on in a restaurant, so we used up our little bit of money for breakfast. We told the owner we were looking for work. He said it was a lumber town and that the box factory had closed the week before. Two hundred people had been laid off. Wayne wanted to get out of town right away. He had a watch and he asked the guy five dollars for it. He offered us a dollar-fifty and we took it. We hopped a freight and had a long, long ride to Sparks.

Wayne's parents were there and I lived with them for several months. They were very nice to me. He finally got a job loading ice on passing freight cars. He tried to get me one but couldn't. Then Wayne and I went up to Tonopah for awhile and he stayed with us. My mother was back there at that time.

Anyway, that fall of 1931 was bleak. I moved in with my mother and brother Bobby, and she was at the end of her money. I was worried about her, she was worried about me, and we were all worried where the next meal was coming from. About all there was in Tonopah was leasing, and the leases were running out, too. Silver went down to about thirty cents an ounce. There was no work and people were leaving. I used to hang out in Southworth's just playing phonograph records. Leroy David and I hung around together. He was a bit older. He had lost his job, but he did have a car.

About February Leroy said "Let's go to Reno or Carson and look for work." My mother gave me five dollars and we drove to Reno. That first night we slept in Leroy's car parked by the university. We couldn't find anything in Reno. Blanche Robb was working in Carson, so we decided to drive there. In Carson we went to the Isbell Construction Company. They were building

a road at Lake Tahoe with the tunnel at Cave Rock. Before they had that tunnel you had to drive around the rock on a bridge. We both got a job at five dollars a day. I was a flag man.

When we finished the Tahoe job Isbell wanted us to go to Hawthorne. They were widening the road from Schurz to Hawthorne. I was supposed to drive an Autocar—a kind of water truck where you sat right over the engine. Its headlights were on a generator run by the motor, so when you coasted down a hill they dimmed; then when you throttled going uphill they were bright. We started out of Carson about 5 p.m. and the truck in front of me had drilling steel, steel rods that hung out the back of the truck four or five feet.

Outside of Gardnerville it got dark and we came to a construction detour. I was going down this slope with dim lights so I couldn't see very well, and I realized too late that the truck with the steel was stuck in the sand. I hit the brakes but couldn't stop. The steel went right through the radiator and two rods went by me on either side. I was just paralyzed, wondering if I was dead or alive. I heard all these voices. "Are you all right? Are you bleeding?" It was pitch dark and I don't know how I am, but I was fine.

Roy Isbell came by and asked, "How come you ran into that truck?" I said, "Roy, I didn't run into it, it ran into me." He gave me hell for wrecking the Autocar. I said, "the damn Autocar almost killed me!" Well, anyway, my truck was gone. They had to tow it out of there. They put me in another vehicle and took me to their camp outside of Hawthorne. So now I couldn't drive a water truck and they put me on a roustabout gang.

This whole time I was writing letters to Carolyn because I knew her school was about to start in California. She wrote back and said she would be driving by our Hawthorne job on her way there, so she would look for me. Her father had bought her a yellow coupe. I was watching for her but never did see her. Meanwhile, I was working with this smartass, son of a bitch who never did any work at all. I got along well with everyone but him. Then this one day something happened and we got into a

fist fight. We were really beating on each other and I heard this horn bleep. It's Roy Isbell, and he said, "Douglass, get your ass up here! You're fired; you're through."

Carolyn had gone through that very day and asked three or four people for Jack Douglass, but she couldn't find me. So my world had gone down the tube. Leroy David came to camp and I told him Roy Isbell had fired me. He said, "He should have. You were fighting with his cousin!" I had saved up a couple of paychecks. Leroy offered to drive me anywhere, maybe to Hawthorne, to look for a job. I asked him to take me to Schurz because I wanted to get on the train to California.

That was the end of Nevada for me for a long while. I went to Oakland to stay with my sister and Wesley. He had a pretty good job as the assistant manager in a shoe repair shop. My mother came down to Oakland to be with us. She and I rented a studio apartment for twenty-five dollars a month. It was real small. Sometimes she slept upstairs with Hattie Staples, Wesley's mother. I remember going with my mother to meet a family that had a grocery store. They used to be in Tonopah. We were sitting in their living room while she talked to them, and the whole point was to get me a job.

Then Wesley got me one at Zinkie's shoe repair shop. I went to work at eight a.m., had a half hour off for lunch, and quit at six p.m. They paid me eighteen dollars a week. I spent twenty-five cents for lunch, thirty-five cents if I splurged and had pie for dessert. It cost ten cents for the streetcar. It was twenty blocks to work and I often walked home to save that dime. I saved twenty-five or fifty cents a week. I put it in a savings account for nothing in particular, just to have a little money set aside.

In those days nobody could afford new shoes, so shoe repairing was a good business. A new pair cost five dollars and nobody could afford it. You could get a half sole for fifty cents and a woman's shoe lift for twenty-five cents. A toe lift was fifty cents. Zinkie's was a very fancy place. It had about twenty big, upholstered chairs with little foot rests. It was an assembly-line deal. We took the orders and gave them to the repairmen. It was service while you waited.

We did some bad things. You were rated on how much you could sell. If a person came in for a heel lift you weren't credited for that, but if you got them to buy a new insole or even a shoeshine you got credit. The big credit was the fifty-cent toe liner. Guys would sweat a lot and it would make their toe liner curl. The idea was to get your hand in there, grab the edge and jerk it. Then you would say, "Well, sir, did you notice this? Your toe lining is coming out. We can replace it with a toe liner that won't wear out your socks." And he would usually bite.

California was depressed, it was a national depression. If you had work you were king of the hill. But at Zinkie's if you didn't sell enough credits you would not keep your job. The manager would say to me, "Listen, Douglass, I have been watching you and you're doing well, but you could do better. Let me tell you something. Every day someone stops by the store and asks 'how much are you paying that guy back there? Eighteen dollars a week? I'll do the job for fifteen dollars.' They are out there on the street, so I advise you to do the best you can." He wasn't kidding, either.

My mother and I were not making out very well. She had a couple of diamond rings. When we would run out of money I'd take one down to the Remedial Loan Co., close to Zinkie's. I guess the ring was worth two thousand to three thousand dollars, a couple of carats. They would lend us two hundred to three hundred dollars on it, and then I would pay that back at a few dollars a week. We always got it out of hock. Gladys and Wesley were pawning their stuff, too. It wasn't very good and they never did recover some of it.

While I was living in Oakland my godfather, Ray Robb, lived in the Bay Area. His wife, Clara, was from the Midwest, a lovely lady. She contracted tuberculosis or something, and so she and Ray were staying at the Fielding Hotel in San Francisco while she underwent treatments. They got to know the Fieldings pretty well. I think they lived in that hotel for about a year and a half. Gladys and Wes used to visit them a lot. And then Clara died and Ray moved back to Tonopah.

I probably stayed at Zinkie's about eighteen months or less. It was a terrible job. I was in a no-win situation. If I worked my tail off four or five years, maybe I might get to be the manager of a shoe repair store. That's all. I did not like any part of the job I was doing. I didn't like putting my hands in dirty shoes all day long. So I wanted to try something else.

Wayne Spencer was living in San Francisco by then, working as a stockbroker. I met Karl Breckenridge through him. They were both brokers at the same office. I think they were making thirty to thirty-five dollars a week. They would get up early in the morning to be ready when the New York market opened, answering phones and whatever. They were pretty well off, a couple of young bucks with money in their pockets. They had an apartment together on Stockton Street. I would visit them whenever I could afford it, which wasn't often.

One night Wayne and I went out on the town together and ended up at some kind of speakeasy. It was up a flight of stairs and down a hall in a building on Eddy Street—a Chinese place. We knocked on a closed door and a guy opened a peephole. "What do you want?"

"We want to come in."

"Well, you have to have a card to come in here."

Wayne said, "We have a card, but we forgot to bring it." So the peephole just closed.

Wayne spotted a fire hose. He said, "I'll show that son of a bitch for treating us like that." So he got the hose, knocked on the door, and the peephole opened again.

"Are you guys still here?"

Wayne said, "Come out and fight, you yellow-belly!" So the door opened and Wayne shot the guy with water. The pressure was so strong it knocked him down. We just started running.

Another time Wayne and I planned and saved for a long time to treat our mothers on Mother's Day. We saved thirty dollars. Wayne's mother came down from Sparks and my mother was staying with Hattie in Oakland. We went to another upstairs Chinese place, very nice. It was an excellent restaurant. Mother was all dressed up. They served wine even though there

was still Prohibition. We had such a good time. We laughed when Mother told how when I was five I got drunk one night by going around and draining all the wine glasses after a party. I guess I started rolling around on the floor and everyone thought I was having a fit. So, anyway, that was a very special Mother's Day. We had our picture taken; I wish I still had a copy of it.

Then there was the night they repealed Prohibition. Of course, it was a great reason to celebrate. Drinking was to become legal on a certain night at a certain hour. We planned our celebration for a long time in advance, saving up our money. We were going to take dates to a fancy place for dinner and dancing—the St. Francis Hotel. I wanted to take Carolyn, but for some reason she couldn't come. So I had to get another date. I had about thirty dollars in my pocket—maybe we had pawned the ring again that day.

We had planned this for months, and I went across the bay on a ferryboat. And the whole town, the whole state, was boiling over. We had our dinner and were dancing. Wayne pulled me aside and said, "Look, I just got the bill. It's ninety dollars!" Our dinners were only three dollars apiece, but we had had lots of wine. So Wayne said, "You dance right out the door with your date. Karl will be out in a short while and I'll join you a few minutes later." Wayne was always organizing something like that, and I would go along because I was weak and poor. So we did it. We just walked right out without paying. Then we went someplace else and then another. We did the town that night, and I know it cost me all my money because I slept at their apartment. I didn't have the ferry fare.

About that time I told Wayne and Karl that I wanted to leave Zinkie's. They weren't too happy, either, because we began talking about going to the Orient—working on a ship. We wanted to see the world, we would have gone to the South Pole if that was where our ship was going. But there was so much unemployment, no jobs.

Stanley Dollar owned the Dollar Ship Lines. There was a skyscraper in San Francisco called the Dollar Building. His ships went to Hawaii and the Orient. They were all named after

presidents—the *S.S. Hoover*, *S.S. Jefferson*—and they were big, big ships. I told my mother about our plan, and she said that she knew Ray Baker. He was a big shot in the Hoover administration, something to do with the U.S. Treasury, and he had known my father. Baker had a banking interest in Berkeley or Oakland, so he came to town from time to time. Mother found out when he was coming and where he was staying—a nice hotel in Berkeley. So I called and asked him if I could come over. I said I was Jack Douglass, son of Billy Douglass. He was kind of negative. He said, "Billy is dead."

I said, "Yes, I know, he died two or three years ago."

He said, "Well, I don't have very much time, but if you are a son of Billy Douglass, come on over."

I remember he was in a beautiful bathrobe. I talked to him about Wayne and Karl and our plan to go to the Orient. He said he had to go back to Washington, D.C., but first he would call his friend Stanley Dollar. He asked me for a number and I gave him Wesley's mother's, because we didn't have a telephone.

Next day Hattie Staples said, "Mr. Baker called and you have an appointment with Stanley Dollar at such and such a time." I was excited as hell. I told Wayne and Karl, and they wanted to know if they should come along. I didn't know, so I asked them to be there just in case. They got off work about one p.m. and we went to the Dollar Building. I had on my suit and tie. The receptionist asked if she could help me. When I said I was there to see Mr. Stanley Dollar, she said, "Senior or Junior? Do you have an appointment?" I didn't know so she checked. "Well, you have an appointment with Stanley Dollar, Sr. He's on the top floor." Wayne and Karl stayed behind. I got off the elevator and it was a private suite. His secretary said "Mr. Douglass, you can go in."

There was this man, maybe eighty-six years-old, with a big beard. It was like a captain's beard and his hair was long. He had on a blue suit with velvet lapels. And he said, "Mr. Douglass I am glad to meet you." We shook hands and he said, "Sit down. Ray Baker called me and said he was a great friend of your father. I think a lot of Mr. Baker. He said you wanted to see me."

So I told him how much I admired his ships, how my friends and I wanted to travel and needed jobs. He said that he wasn't very active in the business anymore. He explained that there was a big strike going on. Harry Bridges, the union leader, had shut everything down. You had to belong to the union to get on a ship. Mr. Dollar said they were having big problems, and that their ships hardly docked in San Francisco any longer. They would come into Seattle and sometimes into Mexico. He couldn't promise me anything, but he did say he would speak to his son and some of his friends who were still active in the shipping business. He took my number.

It didn't look like anything would come of my meeting, but then in two or three days I got a call from some guy. He didn't say he was with the Dollar Lines. He said he knew that I wanted to go to the Orient. He asked if I had any experience with ships, and I said, "No sir." He asked if my friends were experienced—negative. He asked if I knew about the strike and how the unions were stopping people from working on ships. I said I didn't realize how much trouble there was. So he explained all the pitfalls. Then he said he had a freighter coming through, the *Admiral Day*. He told me the day and the slip where it would dock. He was willing to hire us if we could manage to get on board. He offered to call later to tell us what hour to be on board, but getting there was up to us.

So I thought, "What kind of a deal is this?" I phoned Karl and Wayne. Wayne said, "Anybody who gets near the waterfront is going to get hit over the head with a baseball bat!" But we were excited. We had about two weeks to get ready, and we decided to make the arrangements. Wayne and Karl had to give up their apartment, pack up their gear. I told my mother and she was delighted. I didn't tell her about the pitfalls. I had about seventy dollars saved up and I gave her fifty dollars. So I went to San Francisco with maybe twenty dollars. My mother was moving in with Gladys and Wes while I was gone. It was to be an eight-week job, was all. It was temporary, but we were going to try and make it more permanent. We didn't even know how

much we were going to make, but that was secondary; we were looking for adventures.

So I got a call from the man again. I said he had to help us get on the boat—the damn sailors were rioting on Market Street. At first he said no way, but then he agreed to help. We had to be at the Chancellor Hotel on the edge of Chinatown at nine p.m. on a certain night and someone would pick us up. We went to the hotel and got a room. Wayne's girl friend and Carolyn came to see us off. Carolyn might have paid for it. She had more money than I, and a car too. I used her car all the time. We were all excited. We were ready to go even if we had to fight our way onto the ship—crazy and bushy-tailed.

So this guy came for us in a car and we said our tearful goodbyes to the girls. We had suitcases and, of course, they were a dead giveaway that we were trying to get on the ship. The guy didn't like that. He said, "They didn't tell me you were gonna have suitcases." But he put them on the floor of the car and covered them with a canvas. He said not to worry, since he knew what he was doing. He said, "If anybody asks just say you are working on the wharf." Anyway, he took the long way around and we finally got to Slip 42. He said, "Take your gear, go through that shed and up the gangplank and you're in." So we did. We ran into a couple of people, but they didn't say anything.

The first mate checked us in. He asked if we had experience? No. He told us that you worked four hours on and eight hours off. We were going to be in the engine room, so he said we should wear our oldest clothes. But we didn't really have any old clothes. We were used to wearing suits.

It was an old freighter and we were going first to Long Beach to pick up a cargo. They put Karl on the pumps and Wayne and I on the burners. This wasn't our vision of going to the Orient on a big passenger ship. We were pretty disappointed, and we didn't know anything about engines.

They had twelve burners with a nozzle in their end. The oil was forced through them and into the furnace. That's what kept it going. The oil was under a lot of pressure, but eventually it

would build up. You had to turn off the oil, unscrew the burner (it was real hot), drop it in cold water, unscrew it and clean the crud out. You just kept going from one burner to the next. You had to clean each about once an hour.

And then one shift I forgot to turn the oil off when I unscrewed a burner. Hot oil went all over the place. It soaked my tee shirt. The head man shouted, "Son of a bitch!" and he turned everything off. He asked, "How bad are you burned?" and I didn't know. He wiped me down and I didn't have any blisters or broken skin.

There was oil everywhere, so he said, "You're not to leave this room until it's clean. You've got plenty of rags and you're not burned. Anybody pulls a burner like that, they clean up!" So now I'm busy cleaning and I'm covered with oil. My face, my hands, my nails—everything. I took off my shoes and socks and clothes right down to my shorts. At first Wayne and Karl thought it was kind of funny, but they could see I was never going to finish alone. When they got off shift they came over to help me. After about three more hours we got the place cleaned up.

Karl got his baptism, too. He pulled a pump to change a filter, and he forgot to turn off the water. And Wayne did something wrong. He was a hardheaded guy, always wanted to do things his way, so he got into trouble with the first mate. Wayne wanted to fight him, so they made him work an extra shift or two. The first mate gave Wayne the hard jobs where the air was bad. It's lucky we didn't sink the ship or something.

Well, it took us about two days to get to San Pedro Harbor, and then they told us that we were going to be reassigned to another ship—the *S.S. President Hoover*. It was bound for the Orient three days later. So we could go right on board or have forty-eight hours' leave. My cousin, Georgie Money Murphy, and her husband lived in Hollywood. My mother had told me I should go see them if we had time. Now, I didn't know anything about Hollywood or Los Angeles. So far as I knew it was the same size as Reno.

We decided to visit the Murphys. We put on our suits and ties and got on this electric train. We had to transfer two or three times. It took a hell of a long time to get to Hollywood, maybe three hours. It seemed easier to get from San Francisco to Reno. We walked in unannounced on Georgie and her little girl, Cecilia, with our story about going to China. And I'm sure she thought, "He's my cousin all right, but what am I going to do with these three guys now?" After a while she said we should stay for dinner. I guess she thought dinner was the least she could do. And it just so happened that that evening she was entertaining Jule Smith.

(Jule Smith had owned the Butler Theater in Tonopah. We always looked up to him as being rich. He sold the Butler and moved to Los Angeles. Jule Smith was the man who drove us back to Tonopah after we won the state championship and then had to give our train tickets to the girls. He was Norman Money's friend.)

So we had a great dinner. We talked about our adventures on the *Admiral Day* and how we were shipping out on the *S.S. President Hoover*, the biggest ship in the Dollar fleet—bigger than the *Coolidge* and newer than the *Jefferson*. We were going to be in the engine room because now we were engineers! Everyone was fascinated, because in those days everybody dreamed of going to the Orient. It was late, so Jule Smith agreed to take us to the train station. That way we could go directly back to the harbor and sleep on the ship.

So we took the train, and then we were supposed to change to a streetcar for the last part of the trip. We were all dressed up, and I think Georgie had given us something, so we were carrying packages. There were these guys standing around, just leering at us. Suddenly it dawned on me that they were getting ready to do something. A lot of people—strikebreakers, scabs—had been beaten up by the union guys. It was dark, we were dressed up, and those guys weren't stupid.

There was a little café, and we went inside and called the police to see if they would send a cop car to give us a ride. Negative. We had to go about a mile and a half, but we were

afraid to walk it. The street car came along, all lit up, and there was nobody in it. We got on, and then all those other guys did too. They came right after us. Wayne's a big guy, Karl's a big guy, and I'm fighting for my life. Karl and Wayne were sitting together and I was alone. They came for me and I put my foot up and kicked a guy, pushed him back. They grabbed Wayne, but he got loose. There was this metal object over the door, some kind of signal, about as long as a golf club. Wayne started swinging it. Karl was fighting with a smaller guy. And the conductor was right there and was doing nothing. He knew what was going on, but he had to live there.

Karl managed to throw one guy off the train, and Wayne hit another in the back of the head while I was punching him in his belly. We got him off, too. So then we were even—three to three. They just stopped and glared at us. Then one of them said, "Let's go," and they were gone. We were scared to death, so we went up to the conductor and asked him why he didn't do anything. We said, "You almost got us killed. You take us back to our ship or we'll beat hell out of you and throw you off the train." We were rabid and scared. He said, "Look, I'll run the car to the police station without stopping for anybody. It's about a mile. You guys can jump off there and run for it." So that's what we did. We went right past two or three stops. Then he opened the door and said "That's it!" There was a building with a light on and we ran over to it.

"What do you want?"

"We want safe conduct to our ship. They almost killed us out there."

"Oh," the desk sergeant said, "more of you guys, huh? You're not going to get any ride. We're not in the taxi business!"

Well, we're fuming. That guy wasn't going to help us at all. We asked to see his superior, said we were citizens. Anyway, one thing led to another, and this other guy came into the room. We said we needed a ride to our ship and that we hadn't done anything. He said, "Yes you did, you're breaking a strike. These people depend upon those jobs for a living, and then you guys come in . . . . "

We said, "Well, you better put us in jail, because we'll get killed out there."

Then he said, "What we'll do is follow you to your ship. It's about a mile and a half. You can walk down the middle of the street and no one will bother you, because a patrol car will follow you."

"What if it leaves? Why can't we ride?"

"No, we're not going to give you a ride."

Well, there was no traffic and it was midnight. The policeman said take it or leave it, and we had no choice. So we're walking right down the middle of the street, and after half a mile there were some guys saying "Look at those sons of bitches. Let's get 'em." And they started throwing rocks at us. Wayne picked up a rock, but then the cops put on their siren. They said "Don't pick up anything! You just keep walking. Don't look at them, don't listen to them. Keep on walking or we'll leave you." We ran into two or three gangs of four or five people, but we made it to the ship all right.

So we were on a great ship—the *S.S. Hoover*. It was huge. We sailed out of San Pedro harbor headed for Honolulu. We were in the crews' quarters. We weren't allowed to go up on the top three decks. The *Hoover* had nine decks in all. I think we had about 1500-2000 passengers and 400-450 crew—engineers, stewards, cooks, officers, et cetera. We felt very self-important and happy to be on such a ship. The engine room was maybe five times larger than the one on the *Admiral Day*, and now we were experienced. I was doing my same job, and I don't remember having any trouble with the burners. Karl was on the pumps. Wayne got to be a kind of quartermaster in the parts department—giving out tools, gaskets and things. It was summertime and the sea was smooth. The ship cut through it like a knife cutting cheese.

We were paid seventy dollars a month, plus room and board. We slept on bunks twelve to a cubicle, in the engineer's section, the first porthole out of the water. The sailors were on the deck above us. We didn't mix much with the sailors. They

called us the "black gang" because of the grease. We had our own area in the mess quarters and the food was adequate.

Our big challenge was how to get to the upper decks without being caught. There were a lot of beautiful schoolteachers on board going to Hawaii. We wanted to be up there to dance with them. We talked about it all the time, but the passageways were blocked with signs and chains. We thought if we could put on our suits and manage to make it to the upper decks we could just mingle with the passengers and nobody would notice. But then we were working four hours on and eight hours off, and that messes up the day. It is not a normal routine. I think Wayne might have made it topside once, but I don't think Karl and I ever did.

In five days we docked in Hawaii at the Aloha Towers. The pilot and some troops came out to do our quarantine and guide us in. We wanted to get some shore leave. Hawaii wasn't a state at the time, it was a territory. We knew about the beach at Waikiki. Karl was on a different shift, so he couldn't come with us. Wayne and I got a cab and went to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. I was disappointed on that ride. Honolulu looked like a midwestern town in the United States—no hula girls. I wasn't too impressed. We got to this beautiful beach and we took off our shoes, rolled up our pants and went wading. The water was lovely and warm, but the coral kept cutting our feet. It was like broken glass. I thought, "How can they think this is a wonderful beach?" I found out years later that we were at the wrong part of the beach—the only bad part. Later they removed that coral, too. I think we just walked back to the ship.

Harry Bridges owned Hawaii. Years later when I started going to Maui I got to know Tom Yagi. Yagi was the main union man on that island. Tom told me that Harry Bridges was like the pope in Hawaii. He was making a lot of things possible with his union. Bridges was an Australian. They kept calling him a communist and tried to send him back to Australia. The union became very big in Hawaii. All the porters, waiters, et cetera were organized there, and Tom Yagi became an officer.

We were in Hawaii for just a couple of days and then we left for the Orient. We were going to Shanghai, China. What a name! We were going to that mysterious city in the Orient. But first we arrived in Yokohama, Japan. It was our first experience with Orientals. Karl wanted to save his leave for Shanghai because his stepfather had a friend there in the brokerage business. Wayne and I went ashore in Yokohama. I got some Japanese money on the ship, and I was told how much yen to pay a rickshaw driver. We went riding up and down the narrow streets, and Wayne had a camera. It was like in the movies, but in the movies they don't have the odors. There were a lot of open sewers, and that water just ran down the streets. We went into stores where the girls all wore kimonos. It was summer, very hot, and in this one department store they had huge blocks of ice every few feet with fans blowing on them. I had never seen anything like that before. It cooled the air about ten degrees. This was before air conditioning.

We had to take a leak, but we didn't know any Japanese. We found the restroom and went in, but then we thought we must be in the wrong place because there were women in there—women attendants but also both men and women urinating, just separated by a chest-high wall and no doors. The toilets were holes cut out of the floor. And here were these men moving their bowels and grunting and groaning, and the women attendants were paying no attention—just sweeping and scrubbing the walls. That was the highlight of my memory of Yokohama.

The next port of call was Shanghai. We sailed up the Wang Poo River. It was so huge you couldn't see the shore. We were in the river maybe seven hours before we reached Shanghai. Finally, we started to see lights on either side, and we were slowing down. We dropped anchor right in front of the Bund. The Bund was a huge, wide street that ran right down to the waterfront. The activity on it was fantastic. I got on deck and there were all kinds of scows and junks around us.

People were born, lived and died on some of those junks. They would come alongside and beg. They would dive in the

water for anything you threw out the porthole. When you were eating breakfast, if you threw an egg or hotcake or piece of bacon, in they went. They kept saying "So, so, so"—they wanted soap. It was a luxury for them. We just take it for granted, but if you imagine going through life without soap you can see the other side of the coin. An older engineer who had been there many times told me about how poor the people were. He said, "Those people on the junks look poor to you, but they are well off. At least they have a junk." Upriver the people would sell their babies, and the buyers would cripple them to get sympathy when begging. I'm just an ignorant kid, maybe twenty-two years old, and he is telling me how people live in this part of the world. My ignorance was terrible, but then I could see what he was saying. The beggars were holding up crippled babies.

We got off the boat, and Shanghai was wonderful. Karl had found his stepfather's friend. He lived in a hotel on the Bund, and Karl had lunch with him. He belonged to the American Club and offered to take us to the races. He was a successful stock trader. We got together with him and went to the racetrack in a taxi, not a rickshaw. We went up in an elevator to the American Club dining room and had lunch there. It was a very fancy place. He asked if we wanted to bet—he was betting through runners. We didn't have much money, and I didn't know beans about racing, so we just enjoyed our day at the races with the real upper crust of Shanghai. After the lunch and races he brought us back to the ship.

We went into Shanghai several times, and the last day we got into trouble. Karl and I were together and we took a rickshaw to the international settlement, a place where the French, Germans and English ruled. The Chinese didn't have much say there. An engineer told us about a dance hall, so we went there and drank beer and tried to get a date with some girls. One thing led to another and it got dark. It was time to go back to the ship. There were all these rickshaw drivers. You always made your deal before the ride. By then we knew how to say "how much?" in Chinese, and some of the numbers. So we each got a rickshaw and thought we had made our deal. We went down the Bund to

the dock to get the water taxi to the ship. I started to pay my driver, and he said "no, no." He tried to grab my money. I said "no, no" and pushed him back. Then these other drivers started gathering around and shouting. The police were Indian Sikhs, very tall and majestic-looking. They carried whips. This Sikh came over and started yelling in Chinese. Then he took his blacksnake, or whatever, and started laying it on those guys. So Karl and I made it onto the water taxi.

Next we went to Hong Kong, an intriguing city. It wasn't built up like it is today. The people were awfully poor. They begged all the time. They called us "Joe." In Hong Kong I bought a beautiful, carved chest for my sister. I bought it in Kowloon. Karl said I'd never get it on the ship, but I did. I paid four dollars for it, and years later I saw the same one in San Francisco in a fine store. They wanted four hundred dollars for it.

Our trip ended in San Francisco, and by then the strike was over. There were no permanent jobs for us. With the strike settled they didn't want scabs. So Wayne and Karl went their way, and I went to see my sister in Oakland. She told me mother was in Los Angeles. She had gone to see my cousins Mary Riley and Georgie Murphy. Mary was married to Charlie Riley. Charlie had been from Los Angeles originally. He came to Tonopah to start a drugstore in partnership with another young pharmacist—Benoit. Then when Benoit was being initiated into the Elk's Club, they did something to him and it broke his back. He couldn't work anymore, so he and Charlie sold out. By then Charlie was married to my cousin, Mary McQuillan, and they moved to Los Angeles. He started his own pharmacy there.

Well, Mother had gone out shopping with my Aunt Kate, and when they were getting on the streetcar it started up and threw my mother to the ground. She broke her knee or her leg. She had been in the hospital and was staying with Mary Riley, so I called immediately to find out how badly she was hurt. She said she could hobble around, and that Mary and Charlie Riley couldn't do enough for her. Charlie was like her son. But she was worried a lot about being a burden.

So I said, "Well, I have about one hundred and fifty dollars, my pay from the ship, and I'll come down and we can find a place to stay." I thought I could look for a job down there. I was worried about her because I knew that the Rileys didn't have much space. Their house was fairly large and divided into two apartments. Charlie and Mary lived on one side, and Mary's mother, Kate, was there much of the time. On the other side Charlie's parents lived with their two sons, Bob and Tom. So it was sort of a compound. They were treating my mother well, but she was like the odd man out.

Chapter Three

NEVADA HOMECOMING

IN THOSE DAYS there were two tour boats overnighting between San Francisco and Los Angeles—the *Yale* and the *Harvard*. It was eleven dollars one way and an extra dollar for food. I bought a ticket on the *Harvard*. It was a fun ship; they had dancing.

Next morning we docked and I went out to the Riley house. They really didn't have room for me, but I stayed with Bob Riley. He was younger than I and was going to college. He had a Ford coupe. He was really a sweet guy; the whole Riley family was just great to us. Even though he was younger, Bob kind of adopted me. He loved my mother and would take her to the doctor. He was my transportation, and we started looking for an apartment for mother and me. I think she had some money; probably from pawning a ring. We found a nice place for $160 a month, about a mile from the Rileys.

I was looking for a job, but there weren't any. Everything was so depressed. I answered an ad for an artist supplies place. I went over there and they wanted you to pose naked, but I didn't have the build for it and didn't get the job. There were about twenty guys trying out for it. I went to employment agencies, too, but no luck.

Well, someone was handling my mother's legal case, a friend of Charlie's. The City of Los Angeles was going to have to

pay her something because it was the driver's fault that she fell off the streetcar. It looked like she might get a settlement of about twelve hundred dollars, but we would have to give the lawyer part of it. After everything we might have five or six hundred dollars. She was getting better, but she limped and used a crutch. She could cook and keep house.

Bob Riley came by every day. He was doing some kind of graduate work with a big Los Angeles law firm, and when he was through he would stop by. We'd sit and talk, and maybe he would have dinner with us. He just loved Tonopah. He liked to spend part of the summer there with Ray Robb's son, Marshall. I had met him on those trips, but he and Marshall were about three years younger, so I didn't spend time with them. It was not until now in Los Angeles that I really got to know him. He loved to talk about the desert. He would say, "Aren't you going back to Tonopah?" And I would say, "Bob, there's nothing for me in Tonopah. The mines are closed, the leasers are broke, silver is thirty-five cents—I've got to think of something else." It wasn't that I hated Tonopah. In fact, when we were living in Oakland I used to attend the Tonopah picnic there. A lot of people from Tonopah had moved to the Bay Area, and the picnic always made me very homesick.

So I kept looking for a job in Los Angeles. It was almost Christmas, and I still couldn't get work. My brother Bob was employed on a highway crew near Yerington. He and a friend had a little car, and they decided to come and see us for the holidays. We planned a big Christmas dinner. I remember going to the famous Farmer's Market, maybe to buy some fresh produce for the party. It was a fascinating and sophisticated place. It had state-of-the-art restaurants, bakeries and butcher shops. And while we were in this sandwich shop I saw pinball games for the first time. They had come out a year or two earlier. I had a little change, and I put in five cents and started to play. It was fun, and I said to Bob, "These must really be going over great in Tonopah."

He said, "There's nothing like them in Tonopah. Southworth's had one. We used to play it, but it broke down. They never fixed it, and then they took it out."

Now I was out of work and I had no education. I was twenty-four or twenty-five years old, there was a Depression, and I had no prospects. I was desperate for something to do, so I thought that if a guy could have some pinball games in Tonopah he might make some money. I talked to Bob Riley and he agreed. We looked in the yellow pages for amusement devices and got a quick education. We drove around from place to place and looked at several kinds of games. Some were newer, some older. Some had lights; that was new. They cost from one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and sixty-five dollars each. It was very discouraging, because the prices were out of line. There was no way I could ever afford that. So I looked into leasing them. We followed up all the leads, but nobody was interested. Some of the dealers had machines out on location, but they didn't need anyone else. They didn't have any job openings either.

Well then we got to this one place, and this guy had some old stuff in the back room. He said, "I'm trying to unload it. I had to take it in on trades. It's older equipment, so I can sell it to you for eleven dollars apiece." None of it was electrical, it was all mechanical. I checked them out. One was a baseball game; it was a very simple product.

In those days pinball machines were much smaller and generally simpler. Most weren't even electronic. They didn't have flippers, either. You would just shoot the ball and maybe tap on the side of the machine to try to keep it out of the death hole. In the baseball game you tried to get a ball into a hole at one of the bases. Depending on how you did, you might win a free game or two. There were no prizes other than that, but there was a lot of side betting. People would play against each other and figure up a score. The machine couldn't actually display it, but the players would do that on the side. Quite a bit of money could change hands.

Those machines were only about four feet long and maybe one and a half feet wide. Since they were mechanical, there was no back scoreboard, just the playing surface. The back legs were around seven inches longer than the front ones to create a slope on the playing field. The smart players would try to pick up the machine to flatten the surface so the ball moved slowly and became easier to control. There was a tilt device in the machine to prevent you from doing that or abusing the equipment. The tilt device would terminate the game.

The newer equipment had lights and flippers so you could keep the ball alive, and electronic scoring as well. They were bigger machines and a lot more sophisticated. People playing them would even bet on who could keep a ball in play the longest—they would time it.

My mother received her settlement, and it turned out to be $1750. She would have given it all to me. She knew what I was thinking. I took $500 of her money and bought six of those $11 games plus a Ford coupe. The dealer agreed to sell it to me for $350—$150 down and $10 a month. It was a nice car with a jump seat in the back. If I put it up I could carry three or four pinball games after I took their legs off. So I drove to Tonopah with three machines.

My brother Belmont was staying in our old house, and he had the Rex Saloon by then. Charlie Stewart was a black man who had the Skunk Dive—that's what we called it—a shoeshine parlor next to the Butler Theater. When I was growing up, we kids used to hang out there, so I asked Charlie if I could put one of my machines in his place. He said "Sure, but I don't have much room, so I'll move the counter." I put another in Southworth's and a third in Poland's, which was a candy store and soda fountain. Everybody started playing my machines. After the first few days I had maybe $30 or $40 in each one. I was giving the proprietor of the location 50 percent, so I could see that if a guy had a lot of machines and put them around, why, hell, it was better than trying to find a job.

Leroy David was back in Tonopah at that time. He ran some kind of a vegetable and fruit stand. He had a big truck and

would go down to the market in Los Angeles for produce. He would sell some wholesale and put the rest in his little store. He was making a living by going to Los Angeles about every two weeks. He was delighted with the pinball games; he played them all the time. So I asked Leroy if I could go to Los Angeles with him, help him load his truck and then maybe put four more pinball games on top. He was glad to do it.

When we got back to Tonopah I put a machine in the Montana Cafe, but by then two of my other ones were broken. I was gone for two days and had two broken machines. One was just jammed because it was too full of money, but the proprietors were getting mad at me because the machines weren't always working. I didn't know much about fixing them. I kept bringing in more from Los Angeles with Leroy. Then I began paying a little more to get better equipment. There was a garage behind our house where I stored the broken machines. Pretty soon I had six or seven machines that I couldn't fix, so I hired Marshall Robb to work on them and keep an eye on things when I wasn't around.

We learned pretty fast how to repair pinballs, though some I never could. Eventually we built up an inventory of spare parts. Many of the machines weren't being manufactured any longer, so I cannibalized others. I had a good pipeline for that cheap equipment—$11 as opposed to $150 or $160 for a new machine. I didn't have competition, so my old machines were the latest product in the Tonopah market. And, of course, I was looking to expand. I wanted to do business in Hawthorne.

Meanwhile Bob Riley had a cousin in San Diego who was in the pinball and jukebox business. He had a deal with the Mills Novelty Company to put jukeboxes around the city. Bob told his cousin about Jack Douglass and his route in Nevada. Well, he probably would have thrown up if he really knew how big it was. (By then I had bought maybe twenty-five of those $11 pinball machines, cannibalized some, and had about twelve in operation between Tonopah and Goldfield.) Bob's cousin asked to meet me, so I drove down to San Diego. He had the concession for Mills phonographs. (God was it a horrible-looking box! I wish I

had kept one just as a souvenir.) I asked if he could get me slot machines. Gambling was legal and if you paid, I think, $35 per quarter you could run slot machines. There wasn't too much interest in them. There were old ones in a couple of bars in Tonopah, but there wasn't much money around to give them play.

Bob's cousin said he would get me some jukeboxes and look into slot machines. He could give me ten jukeboxes right away, and if I did a good job he would get me more. I was going to be his man in Nevada. The location would get 25 percent, there would be 25 percent for me, and I would send him 50 percent for the use of his machines. He agreed to supply me the records at first out of his end, because I didn't have the money to buy them. They came from Decca Records in Los Angeles. I had to load them in the jukeboxes and change them once in awhile. They were big 78 rpm records—that's all there was in those days.

Today it is hard to appreciate how important the jukebox was at one time. In places like Tonopah, Goldfield, Silver Peak, and Hawthorne they didn't even have radio, let alone television! Maybe at night you could pick up a scratchy radio broadcast out of L.A., but not in the daytime. So in those little towns the jukebox was the main window on the wider world of entertainment. You could put a nickel in the machine and hear some pretty music, but at the same time you felt like you were a part of something bigger. You knew that in places that you had only heard about, other people were listening to the same song. In Tonopah we had the newspaper and the newsreel at the picture show to tell us about world and national events, but we felt pretty isolated—left out.

Then I went into Silver Peak. It was a boomtown, and I put two jukeboxes and some pinball games there. I even put a jukebox way out in Alkali Springs. It wasn't the greatest location in the world. About that time my San Diego partner sent me four or five Golden Eagle slot machines. I put one in the Rex Club, another in the Tonopah Club, and a couple of more around the town. Oh man, those machines did well!

You didn't have to pay state licenses in those days. The state wasn't in the business—it was a county thing. They weren't very strict, either. I remember the sheriff stopped me on the street one day and asked if I had paid anything to the county. I hadn't, so he said, "You better go over to the courthouse and at least give them something." It wasn't really organized.

So my business was expanding. I spent most of the time on the road between my locations. The proprietor and I would count the money, and he got his right there. Then I sent my partner's share to San Diego. I always sent every bit of his share to him. Looking back on it now, there was a lot of trust involved. I don't remember him coming to Nevada during the entire time of our partnership. On the other hand, he had a route in San Diego, so he must have had some idea of what the machines should do. I suppose he thought that if I was jerking him around he could come to Nevada and grab his machines any time. We didn't even have a contract; everything was absolutely verbal.

It must have been about 1934 when I changed vehicles. Carolyn Johnson graduated then and moved back to Tonopah for her first year as a schoolteacher. She taught the third grade. There was a dance in Goldfield, and we went over there in my car. On the way back it broke down. We got a ride into Tonopah with Paul Kasner, the owner of the Butler Theater. He sold insurance on the side and got little commissions on other things. So the next day he woke me up at the house and said, "I'll get Forest Lovelock, the Ford dealer, to tow your car into town and fix it up." He made all the arrangements. Then when I went to see Forest, he said "It's going to cost a lot to repair that car. In your business you need a pickup truck." I told him I was only paying $10 a month. "Well, you're not going to get a deal like that around here. I'll take your car and you can pay me $30 a month." The price was something like $575.

I didn't have a bank account. I would send my mother money orders whenever I could, maybe $150 at a time. The rest of my money, my bankroll, was in my pocket. I sent money orders to my partner in San Diego—his share. I used to buy my money orders at the post office. I was getting about $40 per

month from each jukebox and keeping about $10. I had 12 machines. The pinballs did better than the jukeboxes, and I kept half of that money.

The slot machines were a different proposition. In Tonopah I asked George Southworth to take one, but he already had one or two machines himself. He thought it would interfere with his business. Charlie Stewart only had room for one. My brother let me put one or two machines in the Rex. I had one in the Montana Cafe, but it didn't do too well. At the Mozart in Goldfield I had a good location. I also put a nickel and a quarter machine into an ex-bootlegging joint there, and they did fine. In Silver Peak I had machines in Perry White's Saloon and the Mammoth Restaurant—maybe three in there. Pop Kern had a little, broken-down bar, and my machines did well in that location.

It was then that I learned about my father and the value of being his son. He had such a marvelous reputation all over that part of Nevada. I would approach the owner of a place, say in Silver Peak or Manhattan, and at first it was, "What do you want kid?" But then it was "Douglass? Are you any relation to Billy Douglass?" That was like my passport. I could walk with pride down either side of any street in Nevada with that name. My father never left me a dime, but he gave me something that was much more important than money.

You know, in those days I didn't have much sense. When I would get to Pop Kern's place the quarter machine would be out of order because it was jammed full of money. The coins would spill out of the box and get into the mechanism. That slot machine might have $160 in it, and I never had enough sense, or maybe enough money, to put an extra machine in there. The machines cost $130 to $140 apiece, and it seemed like I was always short of equipment. Anything costs a lot of money when you don't have it. I was always straining, and I just put all my money back into equipment.

But I must have been making several hundred dollars a month. I was really moving up. I wasn't working for anybody—I was working for myself, and it was thrilling for me. I didn't

think I was setting the world on fire, but I thought I was going two steps forward for every one I fell back. In those days we dealt in smaller terms. You talk about a million dollars like nothing today. Then, the only man in Nevada who might have had a million dollars was George Wingfield, and it certainly wouldn't have been in cash.

Anyway, I had a new pickup with room in the back for my machines. I was always looking for new locations. First I moved into Hawthorne and then into Reno. Tonopah was still my base. I paid for gas and meals, but I didn't have hotel expenses. I always stayed with Jack McCloskey when I was in Hawthorne. He worked for the newspaper there.

Whenever I was in Tonopah I would stay with my mother. At some point I had moved her back there. It was before I traded in the Ford coupe, because I drove her in it to Tonopah. My brother Belmont and his wife were living in our family house. Bobby was still with the Highway Department working near Yerington, but he was coming back and forth to Tonopah. Then something happened to his job, or he decided to change. Anyway, there was a dairy being run out of a house on Florence Avenue in Tonopah. It was owned by a Yerington rancher and his wife. She ran it, but she wanted to be with her husband. So they were looking for someone to run the Tonopah business.

Bob and I drove to Yerington to see them. I said that my brother was dependable and that I was a businessman. The deal was that they would send milk from Yerington on the train in fifteen gallon cans, and then someone had to off-load and bottle it. You had to deliver the milk and collect and wash the empties. Whoever ran the dairy had the use of the house on Florence Avenue. My mother and Bob moved into it. Her leg was improving and she was a pretty strong lady. She wanted to pitch in and help her children. She didn't want to just sit around and be a widow. So I stayed in their downstairs bedroom whenever I was in Tonopah. I didn't really live with them, since I was on the road most of the time. In fact, in those days I didn't really have a place of my own at all.

My route was getting longer all the time. By then I was coming into Reno. I used to make some extra money by hauling things from Reno to Tonopah in my truck. Almost every trip I would have a load of stuff for Coleman's Grocery Store. I would go around to different places in Reno and pick up maybe six sacks of flour, four sacks of grain and a side of beef. I would get seven or eight dollars and it was extra income.

I tried to spend as much time as possible in Tonopah because of Carolyn Johnson. By this time my godfather Ray Robb was a widower and was going out with Agnes Whittier. She was a schoolteacher and he was a trustee of the school. Agnes was an attractive widow, and she lived with her son Dean. Well, Carolyn and Agnes became close friends, even though Agnes was at least ten years older. Ray Robb owned the Butler Theater by then. So we all would go out together, maybe to dinner and then a picture show at his theater.

I was anxious to please Carolyn's parents. I knew her mother was very fond of books, so on one of my trips to Los Angeles I went to a bookstore. They had a book called *My Favorite Chum* on sale for twenty-five cents. I bought it for Mrs. Johnson. A few weeks later I asked Carolyn how her mother liked it? "Well," she said, "that was the worst book Mother has ever read in her life!" So I was the *Chump*.

After her first year in Tonopah Carolyn decided to move to Ely to teach. I was on the road most of the time, so it didn't seem to matter much. I could go over to see her in Ely; it was like a trip to Reno. So I moved her over there with my truck. She was going to stay with Mary O'Neil. The O'Neils were from Tonopah and were good friends of my family. It was in September, just in time for school to start. We would write back and forth—we didn't use the telephone because it was too expensive. Carolyn and I had always thought about getting married, we sort of took it for granted, but we wanted to get some money together first.

Every year around Christmas time there was a charity ball in Tonopah put on by the Elks, and we were planning to go. And then about November I got this letter, I remember it so well. It

was a Dear John letter! "I have met someone that I am very fond of and we are getting married." Boom! Eight years I was with that girl! It was a big shock to me. If she hadn't gone to Ely my life would probably have been different. You might have had a different mother!

So, anyway, it was about 1935 that I started coming into Reno. That was where the action was. Nevada's population was mainly in Carson, Fallon and Reno. Las Vegas was a sleepy town of maybe 8,000 people, and there was nothing else near there. I was looking for new locations. First I got one in Fallon. It was the Sagebrush Bar in the basement of a building right downtown. The proprietor said he'd take a jukebox. He said, "You can put in anything you want."

I went to Yerington, too. I think I got some promises there, but no real business. I had a problem. There was a time lapse between when I ordered a jukebox and my partner in San Diego sent it. Sometimes it took six weeks.

When I was in Reno I would hang out with Milo Banovich and Denny Hill. We liked the Copenhagen Bar on East Fourth St. Mark Peters had it. So I asked Milo, "What's the set-up in this town? How do you get in?" He said, "Well, in the slot machine business Reno is controlled by two people—the Benetti Novelty Co. and the Lovejoy Novelty Co."

So now I faced strong competition. I was twenty-five or twenty-six years old and no commitments. I would go out carousing—looking for locations and girls. I went to see Leon Harbert. He had a nice bar called Leon and Eddie's. It had a good, young crowd. I asked about putting a jukebox in there, and he said he already was doing business with Lovejoy. Mark Peters had an old jukebox, but it was the same story. We got to be friends, and I told him, "Hey, I can get you a better jukebox than this." Everyone treated me well, but I wasn't getting very far. I told Mark my deal and ordered him a jukebox. But there was the usual delay in getting it, so I still had nothing in Reno.

Mark knew I was looking for locations. One day he said, "You know, there's an Italian guy running the Sparks Tavern. He sent somebody up to see me about some claw machines.

Evidently, he bought some or got stuck. I couldn't understand his English. He wants to do something. Why don't you go see him?" So I did, and there's the guy behind the bar and nobody in the joint. I put a dollar on the bar, ordered a beer and introduced myself. I said, "I see you don't have a jukebox in here."

"No, I don' wanta one." (His English was very broken. Later I got used to it, but on first exposure I didn't understand him very well.)

His name was Louie Benetti. I told him about my route, but he wanted to talk about his claw machines. He took me down into his basement. Some of them were not in bad shape, so I agreed to put them out on my route—25 percent for me, 25 percent for the proprietor and 50 percent for Louie. He had the candy and prizes that went in them. They were ready to go, so I took two of them to Fallon on my truck and put one in the Sagebrush Bar. It was big and heavy. The proprietor had to help me down the stairs with it.

Then I had to "dress" the machine—that's what we called it. You set it up and plugged it in to see that the lights were working. Then you put in about three inches of these little hard candies—probably about five years old by the time I got them. They were red, yellow, black, pink, whatever. That was the base, and then you sprinkled the prizes around. It had to be done carefully so the top prizes were hard to get. Otherwise the players would win them right away and leave the pieces of garbage. There would be one wristwatch that cost seven dollars, and maybe an alarm clock. Those were the top prizes. Then you had a few ceramic figurines, stuff like that, and maybe a flashlight. It was a nickel a pop. There was an external control that let you move the claw. You had only so much time to position it and close the jaws to try and grab something. Whatever it picked up it dropped in an out-slot—maybe a prize and maybe just some of that candy.

I took the second claw machine to Hawthorne and put it in Joe Nardi's place. When I got back to Reno I think I put a third claw machine in Mark Peters's bar. I must have put out seven or

eight of Louie's machines. The first time I checked Joe Nardi's machine it had $40 in it—the box was pretty full. Then I went to Fallon and the machine was absolutely bare—there were no prizes left, and there was $80 in the box. But it got to be a sad story. The machines were just too fragile. They broke down, sometimes right after I'd leave. So when I'd come back there might only be a couple of dollars in the box. I didn't have a telephone, so there was no way to reach me.

Well, it was one thing to run by the seat of your pants around Tonopah. My service might not have been that great, but I was the only operator around. They couldn't go to my competitor. In Hawthorne, Joe Nardi had my keys and could fix a machine if it was jammed by a bent coin. In Tonopah my brother Bob had them, and then later Marshall Robb. But my service wasn't the greatest. A machine could be down for a week, turned to the wall. In Reno I had nothing but competition. I wasn't the new kid on the block; I didn't even have a block. I had a jukebox in Mark Peters's place, and then Leon Harbert threw out Lovejoy and put my jukebox in. Louie Benetti took a jukebox in the Sparks Tavern. It wasn't much.

So, anyway, I kept the claw-machine proceeds separate, and the first time I brought this sack of money back to Louie we began counting it together. His eyes were getting big. He didn't think his machines would do that much. Louie's brother was Angelo Benetti—he had Benetti Novelty Co. In those days Angelo used to stake people who owned a business so he could put his machines in their bars. Angelo would own a piece of the place. I went into a few bars on Center Street to talk about machines, and they would just say, "Get out of here, kid, this is Angelo Benetti's joint!" Then I met Roy Danetti. He and his partner had the Stag Inn, right underneath the Reno Arch. Roy was real nice, and he said, "I have three slots that belong to Angelo, but I'll put in your jukebox." Down the street there was Tiny's Cafe, and I got in there as well.

There was a Southworth's in Reno. Old man Southworth moved there and left Joe Rippingham in charge of the Tonopah store. Pop Southworth was politically oriented. He knew how to

talk to the movers and shakers. Later he became a Reno city councilman. He was president of the First National Bank here. He had clout. His son, Pick, was about three years younger than I, and he was working in the Reno Southworth's. He let me put some machines in there.

So I was starting to make progress in Reno, but I couldn't get equipment fast enough. I was sending letters to my partner in San Diego, pressuring him. One day Louie Benetti asked, "Why we no go into business?" I wasn't sure, but then he said, "My bar business itsa no good. I gotta money; I lika you business. We be 50-50."

Louie was from Lucca. He came from northern Italy and went to work on the railroad. I think he was laying ties. Sparks was the center for the railroad yard. They would put the trains together and take them apart there, after or before they went over the mountain. They had a roundhouse. Louie arrived about the time of Prohibition. He worked hard on the railroad, saved some money and then became a bootlegger. He had a bar in Sparks, undercover. Then after Prohibition was over he turned it into a regular bar—the Sparks Tavern.

So I told my partner in San Diego that Louie and I wanted to buy his equipment. I thought he might sell it to us cheap since it was used, but he was put out about it. He wouldn't sell us anything. He said, "This is a shock to me!" He wouldn't say exactly what he planned to do. He had a list of all my locations and he said, "I want a set of the keys. I'm coming up to pick up my machines." I told him he'd better bring more than one truck. I went around to all my locations and explained that I was going to get them new equipment. I was afraid I might lose some.

In one way it was a good thing. My San Diego partner was a Mills distributor and all of my jukeboxes were the Mills Ferris Wheel jukebox. It was the worst jukebox ever built. It was a big square box with 12 records in this Ferris wheel contraption. You could see it through the glass front. If you selected number six the whole Ferris wheel went around to it. A motor started turning record number six and the needle came down on it. After it played number six it would disengage, and if there was

another selection, say number two, the whole contraption had to turn to number two. It was a long process. Those machines were heavy and awkward to move around.

So I told everybody not to panic. I said "We've started a new company and you're going to have the latest jukebox." Well, I didn't have any jukeboxes, but Bob Riley was always in the background. He was following my career. Sometimes he would come to Nevada and go on my route with me. It was just a fun deal for him. I told him my situation, and he started scouting around. He contacted the Rockola, Seaburg and Wurlitzer distributors. I made some trips to Los Angeles to check them out. I found that the Mills monstrosity cost $190. The Rockola was $215 and the Wurlitzer $235. The Wurlitzer was the cream, but if I bought ten Rockolas they would give me one free. I also learned about records. I had been paying my partner 35 cents apiece, plus postage, for Decca records. They came to me every week. But I found if I bought enough, those Decca records were going to cost me 21 cents each. I was coming to this end of the business with a clean slate. Everything was new to me and I was trying to learn.

Louie said he would put up $5,000 for his half.[1] I was going to put in my truck, but I still owed quite a bit on it. I didn't have $200 cash. So I went to my brother Belmont at his Rex Club and explained my situation. We went to see Alton Fuller at the First National Bank in Tonopah. We were classmates in high school. I said, "Alton, I need $500 and we will keep our bank account here, too." He said that he would give me the money if Belmont would sign the note. So Louie and I started our account in that bank with $5,500.

I chose the name Nevada Novelty Company for the business. It was a terrible name. But in those days everybody had "Novelty" in theirs—Mills Novelty Co., Jennings Novelty Co., A. Benetti Novelty Co., Lovejoy Novelty Co . . . Mills was the oldest, and I think maybe when they started making slot machines they were illegal in lots of places. So the name sort of covered up. That's the only reason I can think of for putting in the word "novelty," but then it became kind of a tradition.

My partner from San Diego came to Nevada. First he went around and tried to sell his equipment directly to my locations. He was real mad at me and just wanted to ruin my business. I know he approached the Mozart in Goldfield and my location in Alkali. But no one really wanted to talk to him, particularly in Tonopah. Everyone knew me and I was promising them new equipment. So I didn't feel too bad after that. My old partner just had to send up some trucks to get his stuff.

My locations were without equipment after that for maybe two or three weeks, but our machines were on the way. I wrote to the Mills Novelty Company in Chicago and told them I had been running their equipment for the guy in San Diego, but that he was pulling Mills machines out of Nevada. I asked for a distributorship. They replied that Benetti and Lovejoy were their agents in northern Nevada. So I wrote back and asked for central and southern Nevada. They gave us the distributorship, but all the equipment had to be sent to Tonopah and not to Reno. We wanted their slots, not their jukeboxes.

If we were distributors we could get them wholesale. I even tried to sell some. I went to Las Vegas to try. Of course, at that time northern Nevada was much more important than southern Nevada. It wasn't until World War II, when the government brought in air conditioning so they could set up some facilities in the Southwest, that places like Vegas began to grow. Without air conditioning you could hardly survive there in the summer. It was just too oppressive.

In Vegas there wasn't any Strip in those days. I went to the Sal Sagev Hotel (which is Las Vegas spelled backwards) and talked to them. They wouldn't put our machines on location, but they bought five or six. The Frontier talked to me about buying some, but it didn't work out. Boulder City was controlled by the government and it didn't have gambling. But there was the Boulder Club outside of town. It was a barn-like place with a big bar. They had about five slots, lousy machines that belonged to some route operator. Louie and I offered to put ten machines in the place. The owner said, "Well, the machines I've got don't work. If you want to put in ten machines, you can." So I wrote

out a contract right there at the bar for ten machines for eighteen months. He signed it. We were stretched real thin. I knew it would be tough to cover Boulder City from Reno, so I said, "We'll set up eight machines and put two in your storage area. If a machine breaks down you can use one of the two extras instead."

Then there was the Pastime Saloon in Beatty. It was real popular. It had five or six old slots, and I talked the proprietor into putting in our machines. He wanted a jukebox and I agreed. Well, I came to find out Beatty didn't have AC-DC electricity. They were running off their own generators. I put in the jukebox and I couldn't get it to work. I had to go to Los Angeles to get six storage batteries and a charger, and it still wouldn't work. The records spun too slowly and the music was awful. He wouldn't let us have the slot machines without the jukebox, so we had to pull everything out of Beatty.

About three weeks after I had put the equipment in the Boulder Club we made our first trip there. I walked in the door and our machines were gone! There were some other machines in their place. The owner said, "Your machines are in the men's toilet. I even went to my lawyer and he read your contract. I have to leave your machines in here, but it doesn't say where." Sure enough they were in the toilet. They were full of money. Some operator must have made him a better deal, or maybe he bought some machines. We had to take ours back. I was learning about how to write contracts. So we never did much business south of Goldfield.

Then I talked to Newton Crumley in Elko. I wanted to sell him slot machines. I knew his old man wouldn't let me put our own machines in his place. They had the Commercial Hotel, which was the best location in Elko. They had their own machines, but I thought maybe I could sell them some new ones. I demonstrated two machines for Newt and he said, "Well, I've got these old machines. What am I going to do with them?"

I said, "I'll give you $5 apiece for them; I'll even give them back to you if you buy my machines." So I sold him ten machines for $175 apiece.

Mills would send us equipment to Tonopah. Leroy David or somebody would take delivery of, say, twenty machines. We would put some in our locations and bring the rest to Reno. The Mills machines ran us from $74 to $95 each depending on the model, plus $5 freight. Most of the ones we used were around $75 to $80. If we had bought one from A. Benetti or Lovejoy it would have cost us $125. So it was worth having that distributorship, even though we were our own main customer.

Charles Fey from San Francisco invented the slot machine. Before Charles Fey there were lots of devices, but nothing like the reel slot machine. There was the Dewey machine, which was a cabinet with a great big roulette wheel type of mechanism. You put a coin in a slot, maybe a nickel, a quarter, or, in fancy places, even a half dollar. You pushed the handle, and this big wheel turned, and if it stopped on blue, say, it paid two-to-one. They had maybe 150 color combinations and one big jackpot of about $25. Your chances of winning were as poor as in the California lottery. There were a lot of those Deweys in saloons when I was a kid, and even before I was born. There were other kinds of machines, too, where the prizes you were going to win were in the display window in chutes. If you lined up a winner the money in the chute fell out. That was important in those days because there were a lot of slugs in circulation. The player wanted to actually see the prize.

When I was a kid there was also a playing card machine. You put a coin in, pushed a handle, and it would sort the cards into combinations. If you won, the proprietor verified it and gave you a credit. Pop Southworth had one in his place, and Dr. Crowden played it every day. He had $780 in credits, and he used to say, "If I get to a thousand I'm going to buy a Dodge automobile."

We had music boxes. Not jukeboxes—various kinds of player-pianos with just two or three selections. They had other melody machines, too. One had a violin with a bow and a hand that moved as if it was actually playing the music. Mills was the biggest manufacturer of the music machines.

Those were the kinds of machines we had before Charlie Fey. He was the inventor of the true reel slot machine. It was his idea to have each reel correspond to a perforated disk. And then these metal fingers would probe the disks; and if you lined up the holes, a certain number of coins would fall into the hopper. The money first went into the pay tube and the wins were paid out of it. Once the tube filled up, the overflow of coins went into the glass jackpot pocket displayed on the front of the machine. When it was full, the coins dropped into a box in the bottom of the machine. You counted the money in the box; those were your proceeds. Sometimes, if the machine hit two jackpots close together, there wouldn't be enough money in the jackpot display to guarantee a minimum prize, so the proprietor would make up the difference and keep a receipt. We paid him back out of the count. There was a counter in the machine that kept track of the jackpots, so we had our control. The proprietor couldn't claim to have paid more jackpots than were on the counter. Anyway, that was Charlie Fey's invention.

Before my time, before gambling was legal, there was a guy in Tonopah who had some slot machines. The Burns brothers were a few years ahead of me in school and they worked for him. They were stars on the basketball team. Then their boss got the slot concession in Tijuana and he took the Burns brothers there to work for him. I think it was Jimmy Burns who first told me about Charles Fey, so later when I was in the business I wanted to meet him. Maybe I thought he would be interested in backing me—I can't remember.

So I went to San Francisco to see Fey. I was young and he was quite old. He had a little place in a basement and worked as a locksmith. He was out of the slot business, but he showed me where he built his first machines, and he told me his story. He had put his first entirely handmade slot machine out in a bar, and right away got a call to come and fix it. Well, it was not broken—it was full of money. He put out several more machines, so then he had a route. He would carry two coffee cans and empty the money into one. He used to pour about half of it into the other and give it to the proprietor. They didn't even bother

to count it. He showed me several nail kegs that he had used for his share. When he would get home he would just pour his can of money into his nickel, dime or quarter keg, as the case might be. He was always too busy building machines to count his money. When a keg filled up he took it to the bank and they counted it for him.

Well, Mills heard about him. He said they came out from Chicago to talk to him. They wanted to buy him out. You couldn't patent a gaming device, but they were willing to pay for his concept. They wanted to manufacture his machine, but he told them no, he wasn't interested in selling his design. Well, according to him, Mills stole one of his machines—went in someplace, stole the machine, and put it on a truck to Chicago.[2]

That basic design was the beginning of the Mills Bell-o-Matic. Of course, they refined it over time. Mills became the largest manufacturer. Then Jennings came along. Since you couldn't get a patent, maybe they stole their machine from Mills. Then came the Pace machine. All of those machines were pretty much alike until some guy in Las Vegas came up with the first electronic slots—the beginning of the ones we have today.

So now Louie and I were in business together. He had a place next to his Sparks Tavern, several buildings. He had a lot of ground and buildings, but Sparks real estate was garbage. He had a house in back where he lived with his wife Rita and his four kids. There was a kind of warehouse next door to Louie's bar. That's where we started the Nevada Novelty Co.—at 706 B Street. That was our office. We didn't even have a desk, and no telephone, either. We had an answering service for fifteen dollars a month, and we would call in.

The Hirsch brothers up the street kept our books. They were in real estate. I don't know how good they were at bookkeeping, because one year when they did our taxes we got in trouble. Pat Mooney was one of the head guys of the Internal Revenue Service here. He was from Tonopah and was a friend of my father, so he would come around once in a while. He kept telling us to pay some advances on our taxes and to keep good records. Well, one year the Hirsch brothers either did our taxes wrong or forgot to

tell us what to pay, and it looked like the government was going to fine us. It took us something like two years to pay off what we owed, but, probably thanks to Pat Mooney, at least there was no fine.

Of course I asked Louie how Angelo was going to feel about Nevada Novelty. He said something like, "Angelo's my brother. He no gonna touch me. He never gonna say nothin' to me. Our business itsa OK. We go in someplace where Angelo gotta machine and they wanta Angelo out, itsa OK. Don' worry." I met Angelo only a couple of times in my life and he was cordial. At one time Angelo was in business with Lovejoy, but, according to Louie, "Angelo wanta do this, Lovejoy wanta do that—so they don' talk." Anyway, by the time I came along Angelo and Lovejoy each had their own novelty company.

Milo Banovich had told me that Angelo was probably a gangster, and maybe Lovejoy, too. He said he had heard that if anyone working for either of them got a bank account, they were fired. They weren't supposed to save money. If they could they must be stealing. Angelo and Louie had a brother, Dominic. He died early or went back to Italy. He was a bachelor and he worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Sparks. Louie's English was perfect compared to Dominic's.

So we were in business, Louie and I. And all the time we were trying to put more money into it. Louie was a very good partner. He was older than I, but he helped me with the physical work. I worked my tail off and he saw that. I got every location. Louie couldn't really negotiate much because of his English. He would help me move machines and he was along to count the money—he and the proprietor. Louie had his own ideas. He was very frugal. He didn't want to spend thirty-five dollars for a radio for the truck, for instance. We didn't even own a dolly at first because it cost money.

We were very ambitious. I went to Austin, Eureka, Battle Mountain and Elko looking for locations. We got some too, but that was a mistake. There was only Louie and I, and we were spread too thin. You couldn't expect to take care of the business

unless you put someone out there, and we weren't ready for that. We had to pull back from those towns.

All this time I was a bachelor. I slept with Milo Banovich in his place on Center Street. He was rooming with a Serbian family related to one in Tonopah. Milo was a bachelor, too. He didn't want me to pay rent because I was on the road so much. I gave him ten dollars once in a while. He worked as a pharmacist at Cannon's Drug Store. Later he became a salesman for Abbott Laboratories.

One day Leon Merman came to town. "Pinky" is what we used to call him. He was a red-headed Jewish boy with freckles who moved to Tonopah when I was a sophomore in high school. He used to follow Milo and me around; he wouldn't leave us alone. People picked on Pinky, but he didn't seem to mind, he just wanted to be adopted. By the time we were seniors we all got to be pretty good friends. After high school I lost track of him.

Anyway, Milo and I used to hang out in the Southworth Tobacco Store here in Reno. One evening we were sitting there and in walked Pinky Merman. Only he wasn't Pinky anymore; he had grown up and was Red Merman now. He said he had been working in the trucking business in Los Angeles. He had a good job and was being transferred to Phoenix. Before moving he wanted to come to Nevada to see his old friends in Reno and Tonopah. So we decided to go out to The Tavern west of town on old Highway 40. It was the in place in town. They had music with a live orchestra. We thought we could have dinner there and maybe try to pick up some girls.

After dinner I noticed this beautiful young lady sitting with some other women. I walked over and said, "My name's Jack Douglass and I've been admiring you. You have a beautiful tan; have you been to Lake Tahoe?"

"No."

"Well, would you care to dance?"

We danced several times, and I went back the next night and we danced some more. I asked if she would go out with me, and she said "I'm married." She was married to one of the guys in the orchestra. They were from Los Angeles. They had been in

Reno for several weeks and they were supposed to leave soon. The women she was sitting with were the wives or girl friends of the other musicians.

Barbara Josephine Bergh, that was her married name, said that she was unhappy and was planning to divorce her husband after she got back to California. I knew Eddie Ducker from Sigma Nu. His father was Judge Ducker and Eddie was an attorney in Carson. Nevada had its short waiting period for divorce, and she had been here long enough to qualify. So I took her to see Eddie and he got her a divorce. It was early summer and she left for Los Angeles to be with her parents. She gave me her address and we began to correspond.

We decided to get married. I was out on the road and she was coming back from Los Angeles. She was due on November 10. I arrived at six a.m., and she was coming in on the bus about noon. I went to the YMCA to take a shower and change my clothes. I was all excited, really steamed up. On October 10 I had sent her a telegram from Tonopah which said,

> On this day
> a month away
> you will be mine
> and the world will be gay.

I still remember that.

Well, I didn't have any place to take her, so I made a reservation for us at the Ames Hotel on Sierra Street. It was a nice family hotel. It wasn't the Golden or the Riverside or the Overland, but it was nice, maybe thirty rooms. We were going to go to San Francisco for our honeymoon, but then what? I mean, I didn't even have a room or apartment. I was a nomad. I saw Pick Southworth and his father that morning. Old man Southworth said, "I want to meet your beautiful bride so I can tell her all about you!" They were kidding me like that, but I was worried about the situation. Pick said, "Maude Dimmick has some places over on Bell Street, and they're very nice." So I ran right over there and she had this one-room apartment. It had a parlor, kitchen and bathroom—a bed in the wall—for $32 a

month. When your mother came in I took her to see it, and we rented the place.

Josephine's "dowry" consisted of a small radio and 4,000 Raleigh coupons. She got them from saving the coupons when she smoked Raleigh cigarettes, and by asking her friends to save for her, too. You could redeem those coupons for merchandise. We used them to get a wooden card table. That was our only piece of furniture. It was our kitchen table, and we had to fold it up against the wall when we put down the bed because it took up most of the room. That was my first real residence; the first time I ever paid rent. I knew that if I didn't get a regular place, your mother wouldn't stay with me for very long.

Chapter Four

RENO, RENO

SO NOW I WAS MARRIED and in business with Louie. We each drew $110 a month in salary out of Nevada Novelty. He had put up that $5,000 to my $500 and pickup truck, so I was trying to pay him back. But we also had to use most of our extra cash to buy more equipment. When I would say, "Let's take a draw and I'll pay you some money," Louie wanted to buy equipment instead.[1] He was enthusiastic about our business. In that way it probably took a year or more longer than it would have otherwise for me to pay Louie off. So the company was worth more all the time, but we were real short on cash.

After a while I wanted to move the business to Reno. The rent was good in Sparks because we weren't paying any, but we were away from the mainstream. I wanted us to be close to A. Benetti's and Lovejoy's, because that was where the action was. We got a location at 205 East Second, in the Mizpah Hotel building, across from Lovejoy. Then he died and his business became the Rex Distributing Company.

Pete Cladianos was a slot route operator, and he had a place up the street. He was a pretty sharp guy with a pretty good route. He had a big motel out on Virginia Street that used to be George Wingfield's barn. They remodeled it into a motel and restaurant. He owned the Cladianos Building downtown, too. He pretty much stayed to himself. I would run into him sometimes

and he was nice enough, but aloof. I guess he didn't want to get too close to us "Italian" guys—maybe he thought we were mafia!

So now we had our office and a place to display equipment in the front window. It was a real sit-down business where we had our own telephone and could answer "Nevada Novelty Company." We kept our space in Sparks, too, to store equipment. We held onto that until Louie sold the Sparks Tavern.

I can't remember exactly when we made that move, but we were still in Sparks when I got married on November 10, 1936, and we were in Reno when you were born [December 4, 1939]. When Josie got pregnant we were so excited. You were going to be Kathleen Douglass, named for my mother. Of course, I had to figure out where in the hell we were going to live. A one-room place with the sink in the parlor and the bed in the wall wasn't big enough for three of us, and I didn't want my son born where the bed came out of the wall. Well, where the Riverboat Hotel is today there was a realtor, a real nice man who smoked a pipe all the time. He had this little postage-stamp office, and I went to see him about a house.

He showed me one at the corner of Martin and Virginia Streets. They wanted $7,200 and needed a big down payment, which I didn't have. So then he took me to a vacant brick house at the corner of Martin and Plumas. It had belonged to Doug Day, who had the Buick agency. But then he and his wife sold out and moved to California. They wanted $8,000 for the house and something for the furniture. The furnishings were real nice, and there were venetian blinds on the windows. It had two bedrooms, a garage and a yard. After Bell Street it seemed huge to me.

I wanted that house, but I said, "I can't pay that kind of money. I'll pay five hundred less."

"Well, I don't think Mr. Day will take it."

Anyway, we went back to the real estate office and the realtor called Day. He accepted the price but said he had an assumable mortgage for $5,500. He needed cash for the $2,000. I didn't have it, so I offered $1,000 cash and $1,000 over two years at 6 percent. At that time I was drawing $125 salary a

month out of the business, so it was pretty hard to save $1,000. At first he refused, but then Day accepted my offer. So, boom, my savings were gone, Josie was pregnant, and I had a $54-a-month payment to make. I remember we made a deal to pay the doctor $5 per visit, so when you arrived you were almost paid for. I think you cost $75!

In those days Josie helped out with the business. She did our books, and then we got into punchboards. She would look through catalogues and pick out prizes. She made up the record labels for the jukeboxes. You had to prepare these little strips of paper with the name of the song and the singer, maybe Bing Crosby or whomever. They should have been typed, but I didn't know how to type. I would write them longhand. It looked pretty lousy, too, since my writing was never the best in the world, but I made it legible enough. Sometimes I prepared the labels before our trip; sometimes I wrote them right at the location itself. So your mother began helping out with the labels. Later on the records came with printed ones.

Josephine also became very active in Reno society. The couple next door became her friends. He was the general manager of Montgomery Wards. Through them she met John and Miriam Chism. I knew John from college. He had a trailer park, and I put a couple of slot machines in the little store there. Miriam [Clark] was the daughter of the president of the University of Nevada, and she was a socialite. We were also close friends with Pick and Letty Southworth.

So your mother became active in social circles. In those days the Twentieth Century Club was important. It's still around; they have their lunch here at the Comstock every week. It didn't cost a lot of money to join. Josie was a big shot in the Twentieth Century Club; she even became president. She made you dress up in a bunny suit for the Easter fashion show. You gave a couple of talks at the Twentieth Century Club. You were breaking in your motor-mouth early!

So she was meeting people. Josephine was this sophisticated lady from Los Angeles, maybe a little more so than the Reno girls. She was interested in literature. For a while she had a

weekly program on KOH in which she read poetry and then commented on it. Later she had a daily radio program on women's affairs sponsored by Hatton's clothing store. She got into the Reno Little Theater. She loved to act. She was always on the program committee and sometimes she directed. Then she began writing and producing her own plays at the Twentieth Century Club, and, later, at Hidden Valley Country Club. Well, that's the way it was. Your mother was not really a joiner by nature, but I was gone on the road so much that she had to amuse herself with something.

Anyway, when the war started business really took off. The munitions depot at Hawthorne made it a boomtown. The bar business there was real good. We had our equipment in lots of places, but most of them were small. Their operators didn't have much capital, and they were always going out of business. Usually our machines were the best thing in the bar, so we wanted to keep it open. We always had to lend money to those guys; sometimes we had to buy or lease the place ourselves and put someone in there. At one time we had thirteen bars—mainly in Hawthorne, but in places like Mina, too.

With the war everything was rationed, including liquor. So it was real hard for those little bars to get their supply. Each town had a liquor ration calculated on what it did before. But places like Hawthorne, Tonopah and Gabbs began booming. Meanwhile, Reno was going down. It was nothing; it was dying. After the Army came into Herlong the first thing the military did was close down the line in Reno—they didn't want the soldiers going to those houses of prostitution. So at first Reno didn't have much of a war economy, and places like the Bank Club and Palace Club that had been big consumers of liquor needed less.

Well, we could see that if we wanted to keep our locations in the small towns open we had to help them get liquor. You couldn't have a bar without it. Before the war the Barengos were running a liquor route to some of the same towns we were. They were just down the street from us. So I said to Louie, "Let's go see the Barengos. Let me do the talking." So I told them, "Look, you guys go out to Manhattan, Hawthorne, Goldfield, Tonopah

maybe once a month, but we go every week. We can take orders for you and you can just send the liquor out in a truck. If it's a small order we can deliver it." Pete Barengo said, "Well, I don't know. You're in the slot machine business. Maybe the people that don't use your machines won't take our liquor." Back and forth, but then, after we talked for a long while, they agreed to the idea. So we became friendly with the Barengos and kind of represented them. After Pearl Harbor when the government began to ration everything, including liquor, we had our connection with the Barengos.

We had other sources, too. Ed Fuetsch from Tonopah was a liquor salesman and he supplied us. Also, I knew Henry Martin, the representative for the Haas Brothers liquor distributorship. They were out of San Francisco. Henry was from Tonopah originally and was their star salesman here. He said, "I'll get you booze. You may have to pay me $200 or $300 once in a while, but I'll get you booze." Well, he did. We filled up the basement of the Nevada Novelty Company with it. Everybody on the West Coast drank bourbon. At first we could get it, but then if they gave you three cases of bourbon you had to take two of rye. Finally, all that was available was rye whiskey. When it became "take it or leave it" there got to be quite a few rye whiskey drinkers! I think at one time we had 500 cases of it.

Anyway, now we were in the booze business, although we weren't really in the booze business. We just needed it for our locations. They would say, "Bring me a case of whiskey on your next trip." We sold whiskey for $35 a case; maybe $45 if we got something good like Ancient Age. They had to come to Reno themselves for their beer—it was too bulky for our truck. In those years the back of our truck was half equipment and half booze. The liquor gave us a real advantage. Pete Cladianos had a bar, and we even got our equipment in there because he needed our liquor.

We made a big deal that turned on liquor. We optioned the Virginia Bar across from Harold's Club, where the Hilton's extension on Virginia Street is today, or maybe the Horseshoe. The proprietors were Italian. They had mostly their own

machines, but we had one or two and the jukebox. Well, they were scared to death. I mean Mussolini and Italy were on the other side. So Danny Isola kept complaining to me about the war. He said, "I want to sell this place and go back to ranching or something. This bar is no good, no good, no good!"

I asked, "How much do you want?"

"Well, we got a lot of whiskey—$30,000 worth that we been buying. We sell for that plus $25,000."

They didn't own the building; they rented it from Don Questa. So Isola and I were sitting at his bar talking, and I wrote out an option for his business on the back of some receipt. It said I was paying him five dollars to option the place. I told him, "If you'll sign it I'll try to find the money to buy you out."

Louie was skeptical. He knew we couldn't afford it. But I went to see Dick Kwapil, who was the head of the trust department of the First National Bank. I knew him from before. I said, "Dick, things are tight. We can't get supplies—liquor is rationed. We've got a chance to buy the Virginia Bar, and they've got $45,000 worth of liquor!" (I exaggerated a little bit.)

He said, "What about security?"

"Well, that liquor is your security."

He said, "You can't borrow money on liquor! We don't loan money on liquor!" But I kept talking. I said it was valuable and that they could keep it in a bonded warehouse. We would only draw down on the liquor as we paid the loan off. I reminded him that both Louie and I had our accounts at his bank. He wanted to talk it over with some other bank officers. In a couple of days I called him back and he said, "We'll do it. We've already found a warehouse. Every time you pay $2,000 back you can take ten cases."

But then I had to deal with Questa. Isola said, "You know Questa. He's tough. Maybe he gonna raise your rent. Maybe he take over the place hisself." Questa had a ranch, and we went there to see him. We found him out in the fields pitching hay with his son, Don, who was a year or two younger than I. Louie said something to Questa in Italian. So then I explained that we wanted to buy Isola's lease. It had three years to go and we

wanted to renew it for five with an option for five more. He said, "I don't think so. The ranching business isn't any good. Maybe I'll run that business with Don."

I said, "Yeah, but Isola and his partner want to sell because you can't get liquor anymore. It's rationed. Lots of bars are closing because they can't get liquor. Where are you going to get yours?"

"I didn't think about that; what makes you think you've got liquor?"

I told him we had a whole bonded warehouse full that the bank was going to release to us. I said we were making arrangements for more through our Nevada Novelty contacts. I was pointing out all the negatives because this stubborn Italian guy wasn't going to renew our lease.

So we were waiting to hear back from Questa. He wanted to check things out. I went to John Hickock to see if he would run the bar for us if we got it. I met John when he had the Verdi Inn. We put a slot machine and a jukebox in there, and then it burned down. He lost his personal stuff and we lost the equipment and any money inside it. The jukebox was worth $250 and the slot machine $85, so we were out maybe $400. But I liked John and he was available. He was willing to come in, but only if we got a longer lease.

Questa looked into the situation and found out that it was going to be tough to get liquor. So he came to me and said, "Don don' wanta go in the business. I wanta raise the rent from $300 to $500 a month."

So I said, "Who's going to pay that? When they run out of liquor they will just close down and you won't have any rent." I really gave him a sales pitch. Anyway, I think he raised the rent $20, maybe $50, a month. Then John came to us with a guy from Southern California, Mixson, who was interested in the Virginia Bar. He and Leon Harbert, the Leon who owned Leon and Eddie's on Second Street, wanted to take over the Virginia Bar. We promised them access to that liquor in the warehouse. They remodelled the Virginia Bar into a real nice place, changed the whole thing. They called it the Picadilly Bar. Part of the deal

was that we got to keep our slots and jukebox in there, which is what we were after in the first place. We made $20,000 on the deal besides. So that was the power of liquor if you had some when it was rationed.

During those early war years business was booming. In Fallon we had several locations, about thirty pieces of equipment in all. There was the Bell House: they had their own slots, but we put in the jukebox. I thought if I could get my foot in the door in a place like that, well, we might be able to put in more equipment. We had newer slots, different games. They might see the advantage in that. For instance, we had what was called the "Ten-pay-back" machine. I bought a lot of them because I thought it was a hell of a deal. It had this rounded top that displayed the nickels you put in. Each new nickel would rotate the display wheel one slot. If you put in ten nickels without a pay, then you got all your nickels back. That machine had a lot of cherries on the first reel, so somewhere along the line you were likely to get a two coin pay. When you got to seven or eight coins without a pay, you wanted to lose on the next two or three pulls, unless you hit a big pay—like three plums, which were fourteen nickels. All my locations wanted me to put in those machines.

We had a jukebox in the Corral Bar, and also in a night club called the Half Moon. It was just on the outskirts of Fallon heading south. It was a kind of snaky place; it might've had hostesses—not hookers, but not dime-a-dance girls either. Kind of like American geisha girls. They would dance with you and get you to buy drinks. We started out there with a jukebox and two slot machines. Then we were lending the guy money, and before you know it we owned the damn thing. It was a white elephant for us. We got lucky because the manager we put in there did a good business and pretty soon he bought it from us. I think we had a few slots in Fallon's Bank Club, and maybe a jukebox.

Sometimes we would go into a place that had its own equipment and offer to buy it if they would let us put in our newer machines. It was a good way to get a new location, but we picked up a lot of junkers that way. And then we decided to put

a keno game into Hawthorne, in Pete Castelloni's pool hall. We hired Leroy David from Tonopah to run it. One thousand dollars was the top prize. Keno was getting to be pretty popular at that time in Reno, so we thought it might work in Hawthorne. But every time we lost a $200 ticket it would take a week to make it up. We just didn't have the volume. So after about six months we closed it down. Even so, Hawthorne was hot. We got the slot concession from the guy who had the food concession at the munitions depot. There were about 2500 men out there. We put in six machines and they were always breaking down because they were too full of money. We couldn't put in more because we were very short of equipment.

Tonopah was booming, too. They had the Tonopah Air Base. I wanted to put some slot machines in the Mizpah Hotel. John Cavanaugh owned it, and at that time they didn't have a bar. I talked him into putting three machines in the lobby. And then I ran into Marge Cavanaugh on the street (Margery Mullen when we were going to school). She said, "I don't want you to put gambling machines in our hotel. I don't think that's proper!"

I said, "Marge, they have slot machines all over now. It's not a sin to gamble in Nevada."

She was just as mad as could be. "Why did you do that? If you hadn't talked John into it he wouldn't have done that." I always remember that conversation.

We had the leading locations. Slim Russell and Bob Marko owned the Tonopah Club, the best place in town, and we had the jukebox in there but not the slot machines. They had their own slot machines. I thought if I could just get my foot in the door . . . I think I offered to give them spare parts or maybe to fix their machines. Anyway, I never did get my slots in there. All up and down Main Street we had locations. My brother Belmont had the B and B Bar, and our machines were in it. My brother Bob and a partner started another bar, and we were in there, too. A Serbian had the Montana Cafe with our machines. We had a jukebox in Lawson's Ice Cream Parlor. We had a slot machine in Charlie Stewart's place (that pinball machine I first put in there had gone to the graveyard). We had a couple of slot

machines in Southworth's. Round Mountain was also starting to boom, and they wanted our machines out there, too.

We had our equipment in one whorehouse in Fallon, another in Mina and two or three in Tonopah. The people who ran those places were the most honest that we ever dealt with. Man, they were just great people. Since they were not liked in town, maybe they tried harder to be nice. Fay Thomas at Texcine's in Tonopah used to play the quarter machines herself. We had two quarter machines in her place, and they were always full of money. Fay Thomas was a beautiful blond lady, maybe thirty-five, and very nice. One time she was short of money and she needed $1,000. We had been doing business with her for two years by then, so we gave it to her without a note or anything. She paid us back in one month with $100 extra besides.

Depending on how the mines were doing, those cathouses might have as many as four girls working. They would hang around me while I was changing the records. They would make requests, "Bring 'The Yellow Rose of Texas.'" They would wear the records out in a week's time. They played them continuously. Finally, I would leave them a few extras. I showed them how to open up the front of the jukebox to change the records. They had nothing else to do but play the jukebox. There was only one radio station, KOH out of Reno, and it would fade out before you reached Fallon. The jukebox was a great thing in those places.

So Louie and I were having a real hard time keeping up. Stuff would break down or jam and we would try and have someone local looking out for it. Joe Nardi, a real nice Italian guy who was bartender for Pete Castelloni, took care of our equipment in Hawthorne and Mina. He was as honest as the day is long. That was important, since we couldn't trust everyone in those places. Marshall Robb was fine for us in Tonopah and so was Joe in Hawthorne, except he was a lousy mechanic.

It was a real madhouse. Tonopah had 8,000 aviators. It was their last stop before going overseas. They didn't have their families with them, so all those places couldn't handle the business. The crap tables and twenty-one games just had money thrown at them. The slots were jammed full of money. It was

hard to keep enough coin on hand. Marshall would go around and open up the machines, count out some coin to give to the proprietor and put bills back in the can. We could barely keep up.

Of course, everything wasn't perfect. We had plenty of competition from other slot-route operators. But actually the only one who tried to undercut us with his pricing was Virgil Smith. He was out of Lovelock and later became my friend and partner. Between Tonopah and Goldfield we had maybe thirty machines on location, and he decided to make a run at us. He had all Pace machines, smaller than ours. He went to the Monarch in Goldfield and offered them 60 percent if they would take his machines. They thought it was too risky. But then Virgil went to another bar in Goldfield and knocked out three of our machines. He got a location in Manhattan, too. He did pretty well in Fallon. When I eventually left for the army he was still operating and he would cut into us any time that he could.

Also, the better a place did the more the owner was tempted to get us out. Sometimes he might say, "Look, I want to buy these machines from you; if you won't go along you can take them out and I'll buy my own from someone else." That's why we would lend money to those guys. If they owed us money it wasn't so easy to get our machines out. If a proprietor wanted to borrow, say, $2,000, we would make him sign a contract to leave our machines in for so many years. If he didn't owe us money we had to try and talk him out of going on his own. We might promise to put in better equipment. We tried to make a big deal out of the maintenance. But a lot of the maintenance was pretty simple, so by itself that wasn't too convincing. We had to find more leverage than just putting the machines in and then smiling a lot.

Vandalism was also a problem. After we got a jukebox into the Stag Inn in Reno we had some trouble. It was a popular place, so we put in a latest Rockola model—it was beautiful. After just a few days I got a call to go over there. Somebody had poured Coca Cola down the coin slot. Everything was gook—there must have been a gallon down there. Wherever the coke hit

a tube it blew out. The machine was a total wreck. We tried to fix it up, but it never worked the same. In Tonopah we had the jukebox in Ross's Ice Cream Fountain, and somebody took a beer bottle to it—smashed the glass and stole the money.

We were worried about people stealing our machines, too. One time we put three brand new Mills machines in the Travellers' Hotel in Mina, in Baker's bar. That little old hotel and broken-down bar were run by a crusty old man who was kind of famous. The story goes that one day a traveller stopped at his place for a cool drink. The flies were awful, so he complained. The old man said, "They're not bad now. You ought to come in here when we're serving lunch. Now they're all out at the shithouse, but they come in for lunch." That old guy was real tough to deal with, but finally we got him to take our machines. We set up nickel, dime, and quarter slots in his place on the way to Tonopah. We checked them heading back to Reno a couple of days later. They were getting good play. When we were unloading our truck in Sparks we got a call from Mina: "Somebody broke in and stole your equipment!" Brand new machines! They found one around Luning, smashed open with an axe. They never found the other two.

So after that, instead of putting our machines on wooden stands we began buying metal ones. We would fill them up with rocks or pieces of iron. When we approached a town where we were going to put some slots into a location we would stop along the road and pick up rocks. We loaded up the stands with that weight, and then the machine slid into a groove on the top and we could lock it in. All they could do was just tear the back off the slots. It was easier than stealing the machine. Altogether I would say we lost fifty or sixty machines that way the whole time I was in business with Louie. It always happened after hours, and you never knew if the proprietor or maybe the bartender was in on it himself.

But our machines were actually pretty safe, because the big money was in stealing from the casinos. We were dealing in nickels, dimes and quarters. You could buy a loaf of bread for fifteen cents. A matinee at the movie theater on a Saturday or

Sunday afternoon cost ten cents. A nickel bought you a scoop of ice cream or a candy bar. So everyone dealt in silver coins—but mainly in nickels, dimes and quarters. There were lots of silver dollars around because Nevada was the "Silver State." The other states used paper dollars, but whenever they came into Nevada the banks took them out of circulation and sent them away for silver instead. A silver dollar was a lot of money; almost too much to wager at one time in a tavern slot machine. So I think seven was the most dollar machines Nevada Novelty ever had. It was tough to make the license. People didn't play dollar machines.

When we did finally get our few dollar machines we had to worry more about cheaters. They would put a hole in a dollar and use a fish line and drain the machine with free plays. On Virginia Street, where the Gambler's is today, there was the Gem Soda Fountain. We put a dollar machine in there and it was emptied a couple of times. The proprietor said, "I don't understand it, it doesn't get much play." So a week later he called me and said "You know there's been a guy up here two or three times playing that machine. There's something phony about him. He's here now."

So I went there and I recognized him. He was some kind of businessman, maybe in real estate, the kind of man a lot of people knew. He didn't recognize me, and I watched him for awhile. I walked over, and all of a sudden grabbed his hand. I said, "You got something on that dollar?"

"No, no, no! You leave me alone!"

I told the proprietor, "Call the cops." I was holding this guy and he wanted to fight. I was really pissed off. Anyway, a cop came in and took him to the police station. They treated him with a lot of respect—"Oh, Mr. So-and-so, we don't know what this is all about."

We had to go to the justice of the peace to swear out a warrant or something. When we walked in, the justice said to the guy "Hi, Harry. What are you doing here?" So they're friends!

I said, "He had a fishline; he's a fisherman, and he used it on my dollar machine."

And Harry says, "I was just playing the machine and this guy comes in, grabs me, and says that I'm doing something wrong. You know me better than that."

So the J.P. said, "Well, I know Harry. He's all right," and he walked over to Harry to pat him on the back. But then he saw there was something sticking out of Harry's lapel. The J.P. started to pull on this fish line that went right down into the lining of the coat. That broke up their friendship! He fined Harry $250 and told him to get lost.

Louie and I were on the road a lot. Every Monday morning we would meet at our place in Sparks. Maybe we would load two jukeboxes, a pinball machine, and two or three slots on the truck. By 6:30 a.m. we would be ready. I'd start driving toward Fallon. For awhile we had a couple of machines in Hazen; we never did do much in Fernley, so our first real stop was Fallon.

When we arrived at a location I would start to service a jukebox, maybe change the records; then, if it had a couple of slots, we would dump the money. We might go into the office in the back, and the bartender would hang around all the time during the count. He didn't want us to steal the proceeds, and we didn't want him to either. Nobody took their eye off the money. In those days nickels were important, not like today when you can't buy anything with a nickel . . . or a dime either.

So maybe the nickel machine would have $90, $100 or $110 in the box. The first couple of years we just counted the coins by hand. We would make dollar piles and then put two of those into the wrappers we'd get from the bank—two dollars worth of nickels was a roll. So Louie and the bartender would count the money while I did the servicing of the equipment. We usually had three machines in a bar—a nickel, a dime and a quarter one. The nickels had the best play, then the dimes. The quarters were seldom full. The quarters' box held about $400, and you didn't have to count them every week. So if we had three or four locations in Fallon, it would take a while. Actually, I wished it would take longer, since that would mean that there was more money in the machines. Then we would drive straight

to Tonopah with maybe a stop at Mina on the way. We skipped Hawthorne until we were on our way back to Reno.

There were always surprises. We might find a machine or jukebox broken, and we could waste a lot of time on it. We might even have to put it on the truck to take back to Reno for repairs. The machine might be turned to the wall and the proprietor pissed off because it hadn't made any money. You might open it up and find it jammed with a bent coin was all. Then he would say, "Well, leave me the key because I can fix that," but we didn't want to leave keys. Finally, we did leave one in Round Mountain because we couldn't get there very often. The box was behind the mechanism, but you could remove the mechanism if you wanted to, so it wasn't much protection.

I never was mechanically inclined and Louie wasn't either. He never worked on the machines. I learned the hard way. I remember one time working on a jukebox in Silver Peak all night and the next day. When I still couldn't fix it I sent it back to San Diego. When I went in business with Louie I couldn't do that. I was our only mechanic for awhile. If I couldn't repair it on location, then we brought the machine back to our warehouse in Reno. After a while we had spare parts there. Then we hired a mechanic. I was certainly not the type of guy that you would hire today to do anything in the slot machine business.

The pinball machines were the most complicated. When they broke, they were broken. They had hundreds of wires, and the problem might be just one loose one. A broken pinball machine could drive you crazy. We carried some, but we didn't really push pinball. They were just too elaborate and temperamental.

Jukeboxes in those days were probably more complicated and sensitive than today's version. Today the whole thing runs off of a couple of micro chips. Then there were several kinds of vacuum tubes that made a jukebox work, and they were always burning out. Sometimes the amplifier broke and it was beyond our ability to fix it. We had to take it to an electrician. But that didn't happen too often; mostly it was trouble with burned-out tubes. The needle would wear out pretty regularly, too. I could

replace that. So I carried a lot of spare parts with me on our route.

You always had to be careful in deciding what equipment to put in a place. If the proprietor had a tight rein you could put in pinballs and slots. If not, you had to be careful. The pinballs were light and people would beat them up. They had a tilt device, but sometimes they would turn the machine upside down to try to get the money out. They might do the same with a slot machine. There were some pretty rough guys around. Some places were run by the customers.

In the tougher places we liked to screw the legs of the pinball machines into the floor. That could be a delicate matter, since the place might have a nice hardwood floor. If you asked the proprietor for permission to screw in those legs he might just say "Screw you." So we might put the machine in first and then, after it was making money and the proprietor was hooked on the cash flow, we could approach him and say, "We have to screw down the machine; otherwise we'll have to take it out." He would usually go along.

So, anyway, in each location I would do the small repairs and change the records while Louie and the proprietor counted the money. I would pick out the music myself. I had a standing order with Decca to send me fifty copies of the top five songs. In those days I listened to the radio a lot, just to see what was popular. Sometimes if I liked something I would order it special. I would also get requests from our locations.

If there was a lot of money to count, I might finish before Louie and then help him out. Later, we got a mechanical coin counter with a hand crank. Electric ones became available about then, but they cost $250 and there was no way Louie was going to go for that. Once we had the complete count, I wrote the numbers in our receipt book and made a carbon copy for the proprietor. It listed the date, location and the proceeds from each machine. With the slots we first listed the licenses (the machines paid those fees before the split), and then we divided 50-50 what was left over with the proprietor. With the jukeboxes we didn't have to pay licenses, and the location got 25 percent. The money

was all coin, $2 rolls of nickels, $5 rolls of dimes, $10 rolls of quarters. Whatever change was left over after rolling the coin, maybe $3 or $4, we would use to buy a round of drinks for the house. I would start out drinking Coca Cola in the morning, since we were going to make several stops, but by afternoon I was drinking booze.

When we would leave a location we always tried to get the proprietor to give us paper money for our share of the silver. They needed that change for the machines. They were always running out of coin, and that hurt the play. But a lot of times those guys didn't have the money to do it. They were living right off their proceeds from the machines. If there was some special activity in a particular area, maybe highway construction, we would do well there while it lasted. A particularly good location might have $700 in its machines for the week. So we were transporting quite a bit of money.

I thought about security a lot, but we never were robbed! We considered carrying a gun, but we never did. Say at ten o'clock at night we'd be in a place with the customers sitting around watching us count the money. They knew what we were doing. Still, nothing ever happened. Maybe we had an air about us. I never acted like I thought we were going to be robbed; of course, I knew we could be. Louie had a black suitcase where he kept the money, and he carried it everywhere, so by the end of the day we would go into a location with a suitcase full of money. It was pretty heavy by then.

I remember one time we were coming out of Hawthorne at ten or eleven at night. This guy, half-drunk, came up to us and said his car was broken down and he needed a ride to Fallon. There was no room in the cab, so he got in the back with our equipment. We were driving down that dark highway and he started pounding on the window. We had a lot of money with us, and I thought, "He's going to rob us!" So I stepped on it and we really flew to Fallon. When we got there he was blue. He just wanted to tell us to stop because it was too cold riding in the back.

Tonopah was our turnaround. That's where we banked at the local branch of the First National Bank. We might not arrive there until 2:00 a.m. We would sleep at Annie Robb's house, downstairs in the basement. If someone was going to rob us they would have had to kill Louie first. He'd put that suitcase right under his bed. Louie always handled the money. That's the way I wanted it, and that's the way he certainly wanted it, too. When we arrived back in Reno at night he would take the suitcase home with him for safekeeping until we could get to the bank the next day. I never questioned that; we trusted each other absolutely.

So, anyway, we would get to Tonopah late at night. Next morning we would go to Ray Robb's office at the Butler Theater. He let us use it to count our money. Then we'd take it to the bank and make our deposit. We would work our locations in Tonopah for the rest of Tuesday. Some weeks we would have to go out to Round Mountain and Goldfield, too.

We would cover our locations in Hawthorne on the way back to Reno. At first we could usually make it back by late Wednesday night. But after the war started and Hawthorne heated up, we were lucky to get back by Thursday. We ended up buying those bars over there and getting a lot of business. It was a nomadic life, but we were happy because we were counting a lot of money. We could hardly keep up because we had work to do in Reno, too. We had a few locations around Reno and Sparks, we had to do our banking, order records and work on equipment.

At first sometimes we would make the trip to Tonopah and have maybe $350 in the suitcase. If we did the same around Tonopah and Hawthorne we had $700 for the whole route. After the war started and things picked up, we were making around $2,000 for the week. Just before I went into the service we were making a lot of money. The play was so good that the machines were jamming. They were too full of money. We were each drawing $500 a month in salary. By then I had paid Louie back and we were equal partners. Every three months we cut up any extra money. If there was $15,000, we each took $7,500 as a

dividend. You didn't pay quarterly income tax then, but we had our quarterly distribution.[2]

About that time we tried to go into business in Gabbs. They mined magnesium there, which was used for hardening steel. They hauled it in trucks to Las Vegas. That's how Henderson got its start; it had a big processing plant. So Gabbs grew up out of nothing. Lindsey and Gordon Smith from Silver Peak saw an opportunity and opened a place in Gabbs. They had the Northern Supply Bar in Silver Peak and were pretty well off. They sold out in Silver Peak and put a bar and restaurant in Gabbs—the Bucket of Blood. Well, that wasn't its real name, but that's what everyone called it. And then the Smiths got the powers-to-be to say that it would be the only place in Gabbs. They had an exclusive.

Gabbs was in Nye County and I knew Albert Kelly, the county commissioner from Tonopah. I said "Albert, I want to get into Gabbs because the Bucket of Blood is the only place up there and they can't even count their money!" So Albert suggested I make an application to put in a place in the county. I had a realtor look into it, and he determined that Gabbs was one square mile; everything outside of that was county. So I put in my application and Albert Kelly pushed it through the County Commission. We acquired a piece of ground on the highway towards Luning, just outside the Gabbs city limit.

It was wartime, so we couldn't get construction supplies. But we had several locations in Silver Peak. We were never able to get the slot machines at the nearby Mary Mine. Before the war it had about 200 men working, but a Serbian guy out of Fallon had the machines up there. Then they had trouble getting supplies once the war started. Silver Peak was going downhill—that's why the Smiths moved to Gabbs.

We had our machines in Shirley's Bar in Silver Peak, and they were willing to sell their building. It was a pretty good one, maybe 110 feet long by 30 feet wide. It had a dance floor in back, but no restaurant. So we got a house mover and he said, "I can cut it in half and move it to Gabbs." That guy had moved Goldfield to Tonopah and Tonopah to Hawthorne! In those days

they were always moving buildings around when one place went up and another went down. So we had him move the building. I think it cost $3500. We were trying to do the whole project for under $15,000.

Earl Roberts was running a whorehouse in Luning. It was hard to have one in Nye County, so he put it there just over the county line. I think he had two girls. We had a jukebox and a quarter machine in his place. He was a nice guy, smart, but he wasn't doing very well. He wanted to get out of the business. He wanted a bar, but he didn't have much money, so we hired Earl to construct our place near Gabbs. He took charge of putting the building back together again after we moved it from Silver Peak. We were going to call it something like the Pastime Bar.

Earl hired some help and was getting the place ready for us. We took a lot of beer and liquor to Gabbs because we expected to do a big business. We built a lean-to on the back for the booze. We put in a restaurant. It was a real nice place. Danny Skanosky from Tonopah was a dealer for us. He was married to Tom Beko's sister, Rose. Oly Glusovich went to work for us as general manager.

I was having trouble getting insurance for the place. Walter Naismith had our insurance in Reno, so I went to him. He said, "Well, it's going to be tough because there's no fire protection way out there in the desert." A few days later he called me and said, "You've got $2,000 coverage and I'm working on some more."

By now the draft board was breathing down my neck. As a married man with two children I wasn't first priority, but now they were getting around to me. So, anyway, we opened the doors in Gabbs and the business was great. The slot machines were going crazy and we had a Twenty-one table and a crap game. A lot of people in Gabbs were tired of the Smiths. They liked to see some competition.

I got my call to go into the service. They gave me a few days before reporting, so your mother and I had your grandparents come to Reno to take care of you kids while we went down to San Francisco. We wanted to be together for three or four days

before I went in the army. On the night I arrived back to Reno I got a call from Oly Glusovich. Our place in Gabbs had burned to the ground!

My first thought was, "It must have been the Smith brothers!" But then Oly said, "I was moving a pot of grease off the stove and I tripped. The grease caught on fire and the whole place just went up in flames." Oly said our craps dealer grabbed the trays from his game and the two Twenty-one games and headed for the door. But he fell down and the money went everywhere. No one could get to the safe in time, either. Even the liquor in the lean-to burned up. We had been open only about six weeks and now absolutely everything was gone. We got our $2,000 in insurance, was all. It was a big loss. So now I'm history. I had to leave the next day to Salt Lake City to go into the army.

Chapter Five

At War with the Army

WE WERE ALL IN DEEP SHOCK when the war broke out. You turned on the radio one Sunday morning and heard about Pearl Harbor. Monday, Roosevelt declared war and a few days later we learned that the Japs had destroyed the "invincible" British fleet at Singapore. They started rationing things immediately, I mean within a day or two. Meat and gasoline were rationed, and you couldn't buy a tire or an automobile. Everything was a deep secret. They wouldn't tell us how much of the fleet was lost at Pearl Harbor. They dismissed both the head of the navy and the army for lack of preparation. In California there were blackouts along the coast. If you had a car there you had to install a blinker with a little slit in it over your headlights, and it was forbidden to turn towards the ocean. The government feared that a Japanese armada was heading for America. Then they set up all those alphabet agencies in Washington to monitor everything. You had to have food stamps and all news was censored. So there was a sense of crisis and, since nobody knew what was going on, there were rumors everywhere.

Here in Reno we could see the trains passing through. If we saw one with lots of trucks and tanks on it heading east we thought maybe we were losing, maybe the Japs were in San Francisco! Were we retreating? So it was just turmoil for us

because of our ignorance. It was like having a blanket thrown over your head.

They set up offices everywhere so you could volunteer for the army. I talked to Pick Southworth about going down to volunteer. We knew we would probably be sent to a camp somewhere. But after that? Then America declared war against Germany, so now it was a two front war. I was thirty-two and I had two children. I also had my business. I had no great desire to go down and pick up a gun and run off in all directions, so I decided to register for the draft instead of volunteering. I wanted to wait and see.

Meanwhile, the country was getting ready. Before it was over I think we had ten million men under arms, but the government couldn't handle the first million. They didn't have the camps or the uniforms. MacArthur was under siege in the Philippines. He had to sneak out of there at night. The Japs were moving through southwest Asia, taking anything they wanted. It was clear that we had to make a stand, and it first happened in the Solomon Islands—Guadalcanal. It was maybe nine months into the war that the first American and Japanese soldiers fought eye to eye. About two years after Pearl Harbor they started drafting people like me—married men with children. First it was men up to the age of 25, then 30, then 35. I think my number came up in October or November of 1943.

The rationing had a big impact on my business. Louie and I each had a car, and then we had the pickup. We got coupons for all of those vehicles and used them mainly for the truck. There was also a black market in coupons. If you had been doing business with a gas station for a long time it might carry you. There were extra coupons from people who didn't use all of theirs. Still, it was a hand to mouth thing. We were regulars at stations in Hawthorne, Mina, Tonopah and Reno, but sometimes they would just run out of fuel. They would put up a sign "No gas," and then you had to try somebody else. On a day to day basis we got by. We were only running that one pickup, so we didn't use that much fuel. In the rural towns they didn't do that much driving, so they had more unused coupons floating

around. I think sometimes we traded whiskey and beer for gas coupons. Food was rationed, too, but there was Eddie's grocery store next to the Nevada Novelty on Second Street, and we used to shop there all the time. After I left for the service Eddie took good care of your mother. He set things aside for her.

So, anyway, I got my draft notice. I was supposed to report to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City. I had to be there on a certain day. They gave me a little time to put my affairs in order, about a month. Louie and I were both concerned about the business because I had always been the spokesman. By then we had Charlie Nielsen working for us. He was a good mechanic. He knew his way around Reno. So we decided Charlie would take care of our Reno locations. Roy Donatelli was also working for us as a slot mechanic. Louie and Roy were going to run the route together while I was gone. Roy was pretty good at numbers and he could do some talking. And, of course, Louie wasn't stupid either. He just had a little trouble communicating. Then we had that fire in Gabbs. I was trying to hold everything together with glue, spit and hope. I was just wishing that my family would be safe and that I would have a business when I came back. Of course, I didn't even know if I was coming back.

About fourteen of us left Reno for Salt Lake together by train. Oly Glusovich, Eddie Ginsburg and Bill Blakely were in my batch. I knew Ginsburg and Blakely casually. The Ginsburgs were quite social around Reno. Eddie was in the furniture business, his brother Sam was in the jewelry business with his father, and there was another brother—Leo.

When we got to Fort Douglas it was late and cold. They made us stand in a group, and then this guy started barking at us, "Well you people out there, you're all civilians. But we will make soldiers out of you. Some of you will go east, some west, some north, some south. We don't know where you're headed or whether you will be in the Army, Navy or Air Force. You will have no choice. This is your indoctrination and training for the next three or four weeks. Line up!"

Most of the men were young guys, maybe nineteen. I was almost thirty-three years old. I was an old man. The first thing

I found out was what horrible shape I was in. And then I saw that the whole point was to break your spirit and put you in a mold. They wanted no individualism. You were to be part of a crowd which didn't amount to a helluva lot unless someone in charge told it what to do. You were on the lowest rung, and the corporal above you would rub your nose in shit whenever he wanted to. Then the sergeant did the same with him. The top sergeant was so much your superior that you could hardly talk to him. If you saw a guy with bars on his shoulder, all you did was stop and salute.

Now, it was probably easier to mold an eighteen or nineteen year old. That's the way they wrote the program. But for anyone over twenty-five, like Ginsburg and I, it was another matter. It was easier to break us physically than mentally. My whole time in the army was just one big struggle over that. In Salt Lake it was up at 5:00 a.m. and to bed at 8:00 p.m. They made us go on long hikes in our civilian clothes—we hadn't been issued uniforms yet.

After three weeks they came to our barracks around midnight and said we were to line up in front of Building C at 1:00 a.m. with all our gear. By then I had a change of clothes, toilet paper, shaving gear, soap, tooth brush, a blanket, a mess kit, and an extra jacket. I shoved everything into my knapsack. It was huge, about the size of a beer barrel. They read a list of about a hundred names. Eddie and I were on it; Glusovich and Blakely weren't.

They marched us into a gymnasium. There were four doctors, and they made us roll up both sleeves. They gave you a shot in each arm and then you dropped your pants and the third doctor gave you a short-arm inspection and checked you for hernias. Then you bent over for an anal inspection. So if you were bashful why just forget it. That went on for most of the night. About 6:00 a.m. we went to a temporary canteen and they gave us some coffee and a little breakfast. Then they took us in buses to the railroad siding that was right there in the camp.

We boarded the train, and still no one had told us where we were going. We rode all day, and about midnight we stopped.

They marched us into a big building, told us to strip, and gave us another short-arm inspection. We were standing around bare-assed naked and it was bitter cold. In the army, if they moved you across the street it was time for another short-arm inspection! They would have surprise ones, too. They did an inspection about every three weeks. It was just part of breaking your spirit. It was meant to be demeaning. They gave us more shots and assigned us to our barracks.

Well, we were at Camp Roberts, near Fort Ord in California. We were there for basic training. I spent some of the worst days of my life there; a real concentration camp. We were about 120 men in the barrack, and the sergeant had his private room in the back. There were eighteen toilets in the latrine, but no toilet seats, just the porcelain part. There were no walls or doors either, just a long line. So you had no privacy at all. I kept getting constipated because I could scarcely bring myself to go to that latrine. The whole thing was just sickening.

At Camp Roberts most of my immediate superiors were maybe nineteen years old. They were always ordering us about. I would make my bed and one of them would drop a coin on it. If it didn't bounce he would tear it up and say fix it. I said to a couple of those guys, "Cool it! Get off my case! I'm doing the best I can." So naturally that made things worse. I drew extra latrine duty in my favorite place. And when my latrine area wasn't perfect they made me march an extra two miles. They had all kind of penalties.

Basic training was hell. They'd come in the barrack at 4:00 a.m. and blow a whistle and say, "We're going on a hike." So you might go on a three mile hike before breakfast. Or maybe they would just get you to stand in formation thinking you were going on a hike. They would keep you at attention for awhile and then at ease. It was all part of the control factor. There was the marching around the parade grounds, the twenty-five mile hikes, the climbing up telephone poles, the bivouacking in the rain—and my competition was nineteen-year-olds. The rest of the war was a cinch!

In Camp Roberts they broke your civilian spirit and made you a cog. "You are infantry; you are the foot soldiers, the sloggers, the guys who are going to win the war. Here is your rifle. Learn to shoot it, keep it clean; it's going to save your life." I guess it was really the only way to take a bunch of businessmen, bums and scholars, and mold them into what you wanted them to be.

After a while I learned to keep a low profile. I never volunteered for anything. I didn't cause trouble either. There were several guys from Nevada at Camp Roberts. Jack McCloskey was in another company, and I saw him a couple of times. Bob Riley was a master sergeant in the kitchen of the officers' quarters. When I saw him I thought I should genuflect. He was really fine to me. A couple of times he gave Eddie and me a steak out of his kitchen. But I didn't see much of him either, because he was busy and we were on the go all the time.

Anyway, after four weeks of basic training they gave us an overnight leave. Your mother came down to meet me in San Francisco. My mother and Gladys and Wesley were there, and we were all going out to dinner. Eddie Ginsburg's parents were coming down as well. You couldn't get transportation very easily. The trains were full of troops and there were no rental cars. So Eddie and I and two other guys made a deal with a guy to drive us to San Francisco and back. When we got there we paid him in full, twenty dollars each. Mr. Ginsburg gave Eddie and me hell for that. "You paid him for a round trip? You boys will probably never see him again! You should have only paid him half." But he showed up the next day at the appointed time.

We completed our six weeks of basic training; it seemed like sixteen. They gathered us together in a big auditorium and had a ceremony. They congratulated us on becoming dog-faces. We trooped past this captain and he gave us a little memento that said we had finished basic training. Then they let us go for a week of leave. I went to San Francisco for a couple of days to see my mother. She was visiting there. Then I came to Reno to spend the rest of the time with your mother and you two kids. After the

week was over, Eddie Ginsburg had a guy at Home Furniture drive us back to Camp Roberts.

So now it was time for our assignment. They said we would be shipped out in a day or two. They wouldn't tell us where we were going. They issued us two types of bags. One had winter clothing and the other had light summer clothing. They issued us both bags, so we didn't know if we were going to Europe (there was a big push there), Alaska or maybe the tropics. Then they took us on buses down to San Pedro Harbor. They put 5,000 men on this old freighter. It had been converted into a troop ship.

The bunks were eight high and there was maybe two and a half feet between them. I got the seventh-highest bunk; I was really lucky because when we hit the heavy seas guys started getting seasick. Five thousand men crammed in the hold of a freighter. The latrines were awful. So the men in the top bunks started throwing up on the ones on the bottom. You had to put your bag, all your gear, at the end of the bunk, and if you were tall it made for real uncomfortable sleeping. We had saltwater showers. They were practically worse than no shower at all.

We pulled out in the middle of the night. I thought we were going to be part of an armada of ships with protection, because there were lots of submarines around. And the next morning here we are sailing along all by ourselves. We had to keep our steel helmet liners and our life jackets at the ready. They wouldn't let us go anywhere without the jacket, and if they sounded an alert we had better have our liner.

We were at sea for three weeks. We were alone the whole time; we never saw another ship. We were headed south of Hawaii, so pretty soon we realized we were going to the South Pacific, not Europe. But we didn't know where, since there are four or five thousand islands out there. By going south of Hawaii we were below the main submarine area, but twice a day, at crack of dawn and at sunset, we had a submarine drill. We would all have to assemble on deck with our liners and life preservers on. We had to be completely silent. Dawn and dusk were the favorite times for submarine attacks. So we would stand

there in the late afternoon for maybe 45 minutes until it got dark. We were duck soup if a submarine came along. Once it was pitch black we could talk again, and maybe the officers would give a speech about some kind of training session for the next day. By now we were pretty beaten down. We were soldiers. We would take orders from anyone. If they brought out a bird and said, "This is General Magpie," we would have obeyed his orders. Well, maybe I wasn't 100 percent molded.

The food was just awful. We ate mainly canned beef—red heart from Australia. We had SOS, too, we called it that—"shit on a shingle." It was bully beef in a cream sauce spread on a biscuit. You couldn't drink the coffee. The officers had their own mess and they ate pretty well.

We played cards all the time. Some of us found a place where we could sneak off and not be noticed. It was under the lifeboats. This one guy always came with a white towel around his neck. I asked him what it was for. "Well, they issued it to us. I'm serving in the officers' mess, and we have to wear it so we won't get sweat in the food." So one meal time I was up by the officers' mess and I tried to figure out the system. I saw that if I could get one of those white towels, why I could be a server. I found out where they kept the towels and took one. I got into line with the other servers and picked up a plate of food. The servers got to eat the same food after the officers were through, but they didn't know me so I couldn't wait around to eat with them. When I saw a chance I just walked out with the plate. For the last ten days of the trip I kept doing that. I protected my white towel, I slept with it.

Sometimes an officer would give me an order, tell me to get him something.

"Yes, sir!"

I told Eddie Ginsburg and my other friends that they should try, but they were afraid. "What if you get caught?"

"Well," I said, "what are they going to do? Throw me overboard?"

Eventually we came to this place with a beach and a lot of palm trees. For half a day we didn't know where we were, but

then a voice came on the loud speaker and said, "Gentlemen, you are being introduced to the island of New Guinea." There were no other ships, no natives with spears, nobody, nothing—not even a monkey. It was a beautiful island. We were at Oro Bay, at the southern end of New Guinea, and we were told that the fighting was up north.

We didn't have our assignments yet. It was better to have one because then at least you knew where you stood. We were replacements. There were maybe two or three divisions at Oro Bay. We were put into schools there. By then we had broken the Japanese code. They put me into code school, taught me how to use a code box. I had to learn some typing. We had to do a lot of calisthenics, too.

The second day we were there one of the kids on K.P. took a cleaver and whacked off his fingers. Three days later Eddie and I were policing an area and we heard screaming and crying. We ran into this dense jungle and here's a kid lying on the ground grabbing his leg. The blood was spurting everywhere because he had hacked off his foot. People were scared. They were having mental problems. They injured themselves like that just to be sent home. Other guys were going crazy. If you just started screaming all night long they might send you home.

As far as I was concerned it wasn't that bad. They never said "You're in a safe area," but also they didn't issue us ammunition or tell us to carry our rifles. You heard a lot of rumors about how the Japanese had different temperaments, and how they might launch a suicide attack against us. But I figured if it was that bad they would at least give us ammunition. If it wasn't a safe place, why would they run a school right there?

Basically, we were warehoused. They called us the "Repo Depot." Whenever a battalion needed replacements they would come for us: "We need about 400 men." "We need five communications technicians." I think there were about 70,000 of us there. I had to go to classes every other night for two hours, and sometimes during the day. The rest of the time I was helping to unload ships and doing work around the camp. We were an R and R area for the troops from the front. They would fight for

three weeks or so, and then come to our area for a rest. They would swim a little and lie around in their tents. Maybe twice a week we had a movie. So it wasn't such a bad place.

While I was going to school MacArthur invaded the Philippines and everything changed. Eddie got assigned to some outfit and we were separated. Then I was told, "Move!" I had to get my gear and go down to the beach at night. They always seemed to move at night. We sat around on the beach for maybe five hours, and then they took us out to a converted freighter. So now I'm going someplace with a bunch of new guys. Through the latrine gossip we knew that we were bombing the hell out of the Philippines. There were ships as far as I could see to the horizon, mostly troop ships. So I figured we must be part of an invasion of the Philippines. No one knew whether we were winning or losing there. Every dawn and dusk we had our submarine drills, and in about four days we came to a land mass.

It was dusk. I could see a mountain; it was Corregidor. Corregidor was a fortified island in the middle of Manila Bay. At dawn we sailed by all kinds of sunken ships. It was a mess—just a mass of half-sunken ships. There was no firing at us, but you could tell they were fighting in Manila. We sailed through those hulks very carefully, we had Filipino pilots who took us about twelve miles up country from Manila. There were maybe twenty-five ships in our convoy. They landed us with small rubber boats.

Of course, we were pretty nervous. We still had Manila under siege a few miles away. We could see and hear the shell blasts. We weren't told very much, not even our officers. We did know about Japanese suicide attacks, and how they would never give up. We were told to keep our rifles with us at all times, but they still didn't give us any ammunition!

Because of my decoding knowledge I got assigned to a company at Sixth Army Headquarters. We were going to be moved to Moro Bay. They told us that Manila had been "secured," not seized, and so there was still fighting going on. We were supposed to travel through part of Manila on our way to Moro Bay. We went in six-by-six trucks; they carried about

twenty men and all their gear. We started through Manila and the stench of death was so bad you couldn't stand it. There were dead bodies in all the blown-up buildings, and they were rotting in the heat. There were too many to bury, so they were using napalm to burn them up. There were maybe 250,000 corpses in Manila. That smell just enveloped you like a horrible blanket. I would hold my breath until I couldn't stand not to breathe anymore. Most of the buildings were levelled. Once in a while we heard rifle fire. My whole time in the service that was the closest I came to combat.

Moro Bay was about fifteen miles north of Manila. First we stayed inside a huge tent. We slept on army cots. Maybe eighty men slept in each tent. They must have had two hundred of those big tents set up around there. By now I was a corporal second-class—very low on the totem pole. But I was at Sixth Army Headquarters, and we had this nice colonel who was a real gentleman. For the first time I was attached to an outfit, and I began to feel like a part of something. I was working as a clerk. A lot of information came over my desk—like how many troops were needed in a particular place, how many tanks or ambulances. It was my job to keep the information flowing to the right officers.

And then they moved us into more permanent headquarters in San Fernando, about seventy miles north of Manila. It was there that I really stopped being a soldier and became a semi-civilian. I still had my rifle, but I never had to stand for inspection or march. I was like a clerk in a business. I had a nine-to-five job. We were getting movies from the States regularly.

The Japs were pretty much defeated in the Philippines. There were just a few stragglers left. We had the Sixth and the Eighth Armies. MacArthur was the supreme commander. Each army had maybe a quarter of a million men. So in San Fernando it was our job to plan the "Olympic" invasion.

I could see from the statistics coming over my desk that we might lose hundreds of thousands of men in our invasion of Japan. That's what they were calculating. No one believed the

Japanese would surrender. In the Philippines a sniper would tie himself to a tree and start shooting until he was dead. He would never come down out of that tree alive. They had a reward of $500 if you could bring a live Jap in for questioning, and I never saw one.

I was thinking a lot about the invasion. Since I was in a headquarters company I wasn't going to be the first guy off the boat; the generals don't get off the boat first. I figured I wouldn't be the last guy either—somewhere in the middle. But *where* in Japan? That was a big question.

So we were preparing to invade Japan with our two armies; maybe twenty infantry divisions were supposed to attack Japan from someplace like Okinawa. Operation Olympic was a big, big deal. Then one night we were gathered for some outdoor entertainment and they interrupted it to say, "America has a new bomb. We dropped it on Hiroshima. According to our information it killed 60,000 people." Well, everybody went crazy. We expected to lose all those men in our invasion and now this. We were very, very happy. Three days later, "boom!," they drop the second bomb. That's when everybody in the Philippines really went crazy. The rumors, and even the Armed Forces Radio, all began to speculate that the Japanese would have to surrender. And then we heard that they wanted to send three Red Cross airplanes to Manila to talk terms with MacArthur. We told them that they had to be painted white with big red crosses on their sides, when they could fly in and from which island. They even showed us a film of those planes landing and the Japanese generals with their swords getting out of them stiffly. They were herded by our people into cars to go meet with MacArthur. The upshot was MacArthur demanded unconditional surrender. They just had to lay down their arms. But they balked over one thing, surrendering their emperor. They told MacArthur he might as well kill them right there before they would dishonor their emperor. MacArthur was a helluva politician, so he agreed to think about it. And then later he met with the emperor.

Anyway, the Japanese had given up, so Operation Olympic wasn't going to happen. I had been in the Philippines for maybe

five months, and now it was time to move our operations into Japan as an occupation force. Being with headquarters I was one of the first ones to go. They wanted to get Sixth Army headquarters set up somewhere in Japan as soon as possible. In Europe Eisenhower had issued a "no fraternization with the enemy" order. He thought that the German civilians were going to resist even after their surrender. We were expecting an order like that from MacArthur, but he did just the opposite. He said, "We have conquered these people but we will not act like conquerors, we will act like gentlemen. You will set an example." He was much smarter than Eisenhower in that respect.

They ordered us to prepare our gear and to go down to the dock to get on board a ship. Everything was moving so fast that it was loosely organized. We were standing in line and an officer came along and asked, "Any of you guys know how to drive a jeep?" I had driven one once at Camp Roberts, so I put my hand up right away. So he said, "We're moving hospital equipment and we're short two drivers. Go get in that jeep over there. Drive it onto that LST." An LST was a ship that opened in front and you could drive equipment right onto it.

So he ordered me to get my gear and tell my officer he was taking me. Well, I didn't have a commanding officer. I got into my jeep and I saw that it was pulling a trailer with a big tank, maybe a water tank. And then the officer told me not to slow down on the ramp or the trailer might pull me backwards right into the water! So I revved the motor and shot right up the ramp. There were about three hundred other jeeps and six-by-six trucks inside, and other equipment too. It seemed like an auditorium.

We left the Philippines in a big armada. We had battleships and aircraft carriers. We still didn't know where in hell we were going in Japan. We sailed for maybe five days, and then parts of the armada left us. I guess they had different orders. We were all excited because we thought the war was over, and we were going to a country that hadn't been destroyed much by it. Of course, Tokyo had been bombed hard and there were two devastated cities, but the rest of Japan was pretty much untouched. We were

a little nervous, too. We were wondering what the people were going to do. Would they fight? Would they run to the mountains?

About the seventh day we were told that there were no docks where we were going because we had destroyed them. We arrived at night, and we could see bonfires on the shore. We had to land all our stuff and there were no docks! Next morning, when it was time to unload, the sea was getting pretty choppy. Our LST was bobbing up and down, and so was the landing craft that we had to drive onto. I am about sixteenth in line, and by the time it's my turn they had already lost three jeeps in the water! You had to wait until the two boats were lined up just right and then gun it. I said to an officer, "Hey, you're losing jeeps. I can't make it with this damn tank on the back!" He said I was right, so they unhooked the tank and put it to one side. Well, I was still nervous as a cat.

There was a guy from New York that I had met coming across to Japan, and we got to be good friends. He said, "I'll come with you."

I asked, "Can you swim?"

"If I have to, but I don't want to!" He put his gear and carbine rifle in the jeep. By then we had carbines rather than M-1s. We still didn't have any ammunition.

So now it was our turn. The water was about forty feet deep there. The guy with the bullhorn shouted "go!" and I hit the accelerator. We made it just fine, and now we were on this landing craft with three other jeeps heading for the beach. By then it was dark again and the engineers had set up floodlights so we could see. I drove off the landing craft and we didn't know where the hell we were. There was no town; we're just out on some beach. And everything was in complete turmoil. We didn't know where our outfit was and there weren't any officers standing around to ask. I saw these coolies, with their pants rolled up, working hard. They were unloading things. Actually, later I found out they weren't Japanese, they were Koreans—they were actually slaves of the Japanese. But I couldn't tell Japanese and Koreans apart.

Well, we hadn't eaten for a long time. I started driving down the beach, but there was no kitchen anywhere. It was ten or eleven at night. Someone told us about an area where they were unloading ten-in-one rations. They were in boxes maybe two-and-a-half feet long, eighteen inches wide and nine inches deep. The food in there fed ten men for one day. They had ham, coffee, salt, chocolate, biscuit bread—all wrapped in waterproof packages. So we went over there and it was a designated area, secured. You needed a pass to get in. There was a second lieutenant in charge. I walked up to him and said, "Sir, I'm Corporal Douglass. Our unit is down the beach about a mile and a half. My captain sent me up here with this jeep to pick up rations for our people. I have this man here with me to help load them."

He asked, "Where's your order?"

"Well, my captain just gave me a verbal order."

The lieutenant said, "Everybody's got to have a written order."

"Well, sir, some of our people are sick. If I go back and tell my captain that, I'm in big trouble."

He started to waver. He said, "We can't make exceptions all the time."

"So what do I do, sir?"

"Well, drive your jeep in there and take what you need." So we loaded seven or eight of the packages on our jeep; we had more food than any other soldier on the beach.

We started driving, and pretty soon we were all alone. We broke open a package and just stuffed ourselves sitting in the jeep. It had cigarettes, too. About dawn some officers' vehicles began driving up and down the beach. An officer with a bullhorn ordered all manned jeeps to fall into a line. There were about a hundred and twenty of us, and some six-by-sixes. Then they gave the order and we all started driving in a big column. We didn't know who was in charge or where we were going. Finally, the word went from jeep to jeep that we were heading for Kyoto, a city of more than a million people.

We came over this hill and there was Kyoto. We had our Japanese books which told you how to say things like *arigato* (thank you), *ohayo* (good morning) and how to count. We had been studying a little bit on the ship, so we could say a few simple things. There we were in our jeep with our rations, our phrase books, our carbines, and in this column that we didn't even belong to. We paused on this hilltop, and then the order came "Break out your ammunition." Well, we didn't have any! Not one of those jeeps had any ammunition. I guess there must have been some back at the beach.

They decided to proceed into Kyoto anyway, and there was not one soul in sight—nobody. Occasionally a curtain would move on a window, so we knew we were being watched. Then an officer came along and said, "My instructions are that we're staying at the Imperial University." But he didn't know what to do or how to get there. We sat around for about half an hour until he came back with some Japanese people. They led us to the university.

My friend and I thought that there was no way we were going to be able to keep our rations for very long, or the jeep either. He went into a big building, like a gymnasium, where we were going to be quartered while I stayed in the jeep to watch over the rations. He came back and said, "Well, all we have to do is go in and set up our cots. They aren't doing any assigning or signing-in either." Then we got the idea of putting the rations under our cots with the blankets hanging down to hide them. Nobody knew who we were or the name of our outfit. So we took over an out-of-the-way corner and put our cots real close together to conceal those rations.

Kyoto was a beautiful and unique place. It was the original home of the emperor before they moved him to Tokyo. So it was an ancient city and a cultural center. The geishas originated there, too. They were high-class entertainment girls, not prostitutes. And not one bomb had been dropped on Kyoto. The university was a wonderful place. I still remember the gardens and a little rainbow bridge. The steps were like castanets. They played notes anytime you stepped on one. The pond was full of

hundreds of Koi fish. When they heard your steps they came in a school to be fed. You had to take them some food or they would get angry with you.

So there we were. We had all the rations, except the one box we left in the jeep, hidden under our cots. And right away somebody asked "Where can we get some beer?" Well, we had the jeep, so several of us took off. One guy knew something about Kyoto and directed us to a shopping district, but everything was closed. By then we were maybe three or four jeeps in all—twelve or fourteen GIs. We found a man who spoke a little English, and he said everyone was afraid because the conquerors were coming to town. They didn't know how to act. But then he said he could take us to a geisha house and they would have beer. So we drove through narrow streets and went into this two-story house where there were four or five women in kimonos bowing and kneeling down. We had our books and they knew a little pidgin English. "Beera, beera, beera"—and we had our beer.

Then men and women started coming in off the street just to stare at the round-eyed, big-nosed foreigners—Americans who weren't killing Japanese. They were friendly and they wanted some beer, too. So first there was a parade which then became more like a party. I went out to the jeep and brought in those rations. I started opening the packages. The contents were listed on the waterproof wrapping, but the labels were hard to read without good light. I was trying to figure out what we had and people were just grabbing it out of my hand before I could. They were saying "Ikura desu ka?" (how much?) and shoving yen at us. Well, we could see that there was a big demand. So I said to the interpreter guy, "Tell them to wait here if they want to buy."

So by then we had only been in Kyoto for four or five hours. It was getting to be dusk. My buddy and I drove back to the university to get the rations. We figured we were probably going to lose them anyway. In the army anything that wasn't tied down and under guard had a way of disappearing. Here was an opportunity. Well, we loaded four or five boxes of rations on our jeep. Then we thought, "It's getting dark. Those people were

pretty excited. Maybe we better bring along our flashlights and our carbines, too." When we got back to the geisha house there was a crowd outside. There were too many people to try and do business inside, so we decided to sell rations right out of the jeep. We had our carbines just to impress them that we were *soldiers*, and they had better not fool around too much with us! Of course, we didn't have any bullets.

So here was this crowd of maybe forty people. They had heard we were going to sell wonderful things from the United States I guess. There were young boys and old men—the young men were all in their army—and lots of women of all ages. So everyone's shouting "tomodachi" (friend), and I think they had "Dogelass" down by then. "Tomodachi Dogelass." We finally made them understand that we weren't going to open the boxes until we were ready. We knew that the yen was worth three to one dollar. So we were trying to make up our prices. We wanted ten dollars for a ham, so that was thirty yen. We took our bayonets and started cutting open boxes. And then they just pushed forward and started grabbing the stuff. "Ikura desu ka?" and they would just put down yen before we could answer. Maybe one guy would put down fifty or a hundred yen for a ham and another would grab a box of salt for the same amount. So I shouted to my friend, "Grab the rifle and line them up!" Well, they took it from him and started passing it around. "Ikura desu ka?" Then they got our flashlights, too. "Ikura desu ka?" In ten minutes everything was gone—the food, our carbines, the flashlights! And we had a big basketful of yen. We had no idea how much, but it was an awful lot. So that's how I got rich in Kyoto.

We still had two or three boxes of rations, so we ran our store one more time. We knew we would lose our jeep once the hospital group came together. They would be looking for it. Well, eventually we counted our money and we had eleven or twelve thousand dollars in yen. We were real popular in that neighborhood, too. They were very friendly to us. They offered us tea, and we got to know some pretty educated Japanese people. There was one man who was a banker and he knew some

English. He was educated for awhile in this country. He got to be our friend and would show us around. There were other civilians hanging on us too. A couple of them just took us over and became our guides. We would give them a little money. One night we all went to a really fancy geisha place for a dinner. So here we were, two GIs and these fifty-year-old influential civilians. The geishas had their instruments and they played, sang and danced. They rubbed our backs and put wet cloths on our foreheads. It was a seven-course meal, a big deal. Very formal. Of course we paid for the dinner.

By then we had been in Kyoto for several days and they still hadn't set up Sixth Army Headquarters. So I was pretty free, hanging loose. I had the jeep, so I said to my banker friend that I would like to go shopping while I still had transportation. We went to this big department store—like the Emporium in San Francisco. They didn't have too much merchandise. But they did have beautiful silk items, statuettes, teacups, fans and other things. And everything was very cheap. I bought a dozen of this and a dozen of that. They had beautiful ceramic statues for four or five yen. And my banker friend said, "The prices are cheap, but we can't buy without ration stamps. You are a GI. You can buy anything you want. Nobody is going to stop you." I bought about three or four dozen silk handkerchiefs. They were beautiful, but a little bit odd-shaped. My banker friend said "no, no," but I didn't pay any attention. And later I found out they were kimono sleeves! I had never heard of kimono sleeves before, but I ended up with a lot of them.

So I had to send my stuff home. My friends took us to a place where they made wooden boxes. They built me two that were like pieces of furniture. And then they wrapped everything so carefully. I was set. Not one of those ceramic statues or teacups was broken in transit. For years after I gave them away as gifts.

About five days after the landing the army picked up my jeep. They had been looking all over Kyoto for it! Then they wanted to know where the tank was. I said, "They took it away

from me in the Philippines. I haven't seen it since." They said, "Well, we need that tank." They weren't very happy.

So I was reduced again to being a corporal—a dog-face. By then the Sixth Army had its headquarters in a skyscraper downtown. I started to work there; the same thing I was doing in the Philippines, just sorting papers. The difference was we weren't planning the Olympic invasion. Now we were trying to work with the Japanese to run the city. Our officials were always meeting with the city authorities to work out problems. Of course, that was all way above me. We were also working on how to set up the infrastructure of occupation without clashing too much with their way of life.

And then they set up a points system to start sending men home. I think you needed thirty points. You and John were each worth about eight or ten points. Each year of service was worth about ten. I needed thirty or thirty-one points and I had twenty-eight. If you were that close it was a political thing, since a sympathetic officer could always get you a couple of points. We were heading into winter and I was working on my points. I had one foot in Kyoto and the other on the boat.

Finally, I had my points and I was ordered home. I had about a week before shipping out, so I spent what yen I had left on having a good time. I went to the landing area where about 4,000 GIs were getting ready to board different ships. There were hundreds of cases of guys hugging their Japanese sweethearts while saying goodbye. Lots of crying. I got assigned to an old freighter—it was really horrible. Originally it had five decks, but four had been removed. Just to get topside you had to climb a four-story ladder. There was no kitchen, either. We had to cook on deck as if we were in the field. We ate out of our mess kits. The latrine was a wooden plank affair over the side of the ship. There were about one hundred and thirty GIs on the ship. It took us three weeks—our full speed ahead was six knots. That ship was one of the toughest duties of the whole war. It was November—cold—and the only heat was from the engine. As usual they wouldn't tell us anything. We thought maybe we were

headed for Seattle, but we landed at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay.

They held us there for a couple of days and gave us some shots. I drank lots of milk because we hadn't seen it for a long time. Everyone was crazy for milk. Then they took us in trucks to someplace outside Sacramento. They discharged me, and in Roseville I caught a bus to Reno.

I took a taxicab to the house. It felt kind of strange. Of course, I remembered you; I'd sent you a letter written on a banana leaf and a coconut, too. You were about four when I left, so I knew you as a son. It was different with John. When I left for the army he was just a baby in a crib. So on the night of my homecoming we had a nice dinner. And then when it got to be about 9:00 p.m. John said to me, "It's our bedtime, so you have to go home now!"

spaper cartoon announcing the formation ofthe Tonopah group that acquired the Spider and Wasp
onder, Nevada, 1907. Jack Douglass's father and Jack's uncle Jim McQuillan were among the part



Members of the William J. Douglass family on a trip to San Francisco, circa 1916.
Back row (left to right) Belmont and Gladys.
Front row (left to right) Bob, Kathleen and Jack.



Jack Douglass as an all-state basketball player for Tonopah High, 1929.



Wayne Spencer and friend during the trip that Jack and Wayne took to the Orient in 1931.



The emperor of Kyoto.



Jack and Barbara Josephine in front of their Bell Street apartment, 1939.



Louie Benetti surrounded by slot machines under repair
at the Nevada Novelty Company, circa 1955.
Photo courtesy of Roy Donatelli



The Douglass family, circa 1965.
Back row (left to right) Bill, John, and Jack.
Front row (left to right) Dan, Barbara Josephine and David.



Arriving at Heathrow airport in London on the Sell Nevada Tour in 1962. Jack Douglass (second from left), Governor Grant Sawyer (third from left) and Ed Ginsburg (first from right).



Opening night ofthe remodelled Cal-Neva Lodge, 1968.
From left to right: Warren Nelson, William Raggio, Leon Nightingale,
Jackie Nightingale, and Jack Douglass.

Chapter Six

OPERATION OLYMPIC TO THE WINTER OLYMPICS

WHILE I WAS GONE in the army Louie held the business together pretty well. He wanted me to make decisions now that the war was over and things were changing fast. My attorney, Doug Busey, had lots of papers for me to review and sign. So I didn't have time for an adjustment. After two years in the service I couldn't sit around and contemplate my navel.

Tonopah went from 8,000 servicemen to nothing. So, bang, it was over! All of our business there came to a screeching halt. We owned maybe five or six bars in Hawthorne, and the munitions dump was cutting back, too. Now you could get as much liquor as you wanted, so our special contacts with suppliers didn't amount to anything. On the other hand, Reno had taken off. Business there had been slow during the first part of the war, but towards the end the government started up Stead Air Force Base and it survived the peace. There were some bars on Commercial Row that wanted to borrow money from us to expand. So our business was shifting. The outside perimeter was going downhill, but Reno was picking up.

I had a personal problem to deal with as well. Your mother had done a wonderful job watching after our business interests and you boys. She had to do that without even knowing if I was ever coming back. So it wasn't easy. Before I left for the army I told her not to pay any income taxes while I was gone. I thought

maybe they would forgive the GIs' income taxes for fighting for their country. So Josie didn't pay—but she didn't save the money either. Then the government didn't waive the soldiers' taxes, and so we had a big tax bill. One day this tall, good-looking young man from Fallon came to see me. He was with the IRS and he said, "You have to pay up and there's probably going to be a big fine, too."

We had a part-time bookkeeper and I had him prepare a report on how the Nevada Novelty Company was doing. It showed how a lot of our locations in Hawthorne were closing down. So I said to the IRS, "I'll pay you what I can."

"Well, come up with a plan, Mr. Douglass."

So I offered to pay $500 a month and they said, "That's not enough." I think I owed about $7,500 and they agreed to $650 a month at 6 percent interest. There was no fine.

Actually, it was my fault for telling Josie not to pay the taxes. If she had paid them she wouldn't have had that money to spend. She had become a socialite and during the war she was running around with Laura Ginsburg. They got to be close friends because Eddie and I were in the service together. There were several nice Jewish families around here with a very active social life. Josephine was right in the middle of it and was living high on the hog. She and Laura would go on shopping trips to San Francisco.

Anyway, after the war Nevada Novelty entered into several partnerships with bars here in Reno. We put some money into the Stag Inn, where Fitzgerald's is today, and into another place next door. We were in a bar across the street from the Club Cal-Neva, where Harrah's is now, and in one next to the Golden Hotel, too. So we were making loans here and there, and buying more equipment all the time. The business was growing, but in another way we were drifting. In those days it was harder to borrow money; nobody had a line of credit. So we always needed equipment and we were always undermanned. Louie didn't believe in hiring people, and I was pretty much in agreement. We probably should have hired four or five men and gotten a bigger place. We outgrew our Second Street location and began to store

some of our equipment in warehouses. That caused logistical problems. So I would say we were too conservative. We mismanaged or, rather, overmanaged the business. We couldn't cover all the bases.

Louie was a cautious Italian. He was from the old school. By the time I got to know him he had some money and property—strictly through hard work and saving. Just before the war I was really frustrated with Louie. I wanted to go to the bank and borrow money. If we bought ten jukeboxes at a time, or maybe twenty or thirty slot machines, we could get a good discount. Louie wouldn't do it. He said, "I don' wanta owe!" But we were very shortsighted, because when the war started they stopped making our equipment and a $100 slot machine was suddenly worth $300. During the war we could have made a killing just by selling used equipment, if only we had had foresight.

I remember my friends would ask, "How do you and Louie get along?"

I'd say, "Well, you know, if I had a different partner, I think we could have made more money." But, on the other side of the coin, if I had had another partner we might have gone broke early. As it was I would say by the late 1940s and early 1950s we were making about $100,000 a year as a business. It was no great bonanza, but it was steady.

Right after the war both of my brothers worked for us here in Reno. Belmont had been in the Seabees, stationed in Alaska off Kodiak Island. He got out early. After he was discharged he needed something to do, so he worked for us. We also had the Doll House on South Virginia Street and I put Bob Douglass in there to run it. But one night Nick Banovich came by and maybe some of his other friends from Tonopah, too. They started drinking and I guess they decided to go to bed in the back to sleep it off. They didn't even lock up the place. When they woke up the slots were gone! They just took off. I guess Bob was afraid to face me.

Later I put Bob Douglass into some of our bars in Hawthorne. Oly Glusovich became our main man there. He was

personable and I liked Oly, but he didn't have the best grasp on things. Then he was killed in an automobile accident.

We had hired Roy Donatelli before the war and he became our chief slot mechanic. We got Gabe Gabrielli, too, as another mechanic. Belmont and Roy would go on the road together, but Belmont didn't like the travel. So I got him a job at the Stag Inn as a bartender. He was a good one. He had the gift of gab. He made the customer laugh. He was full of stories. He was the one that you should have recorded for a family history. He knew all the details—the stories and the myths. Whenever Louie and I bought a bar we might put Belmont in there. At the end of his life he was still tending bar and living in a mobile home here in Reno.

Roy and Gabe would both go on the road some and help out with the night duty when in Reno. Ross Fulton worked for us as a mechanic, too, but then he wanted to do something on his own. He started buying used machines and fixing them up for sale. He was a better mechanic than salesperson, so he finally sold out. Ross went to work as slot manager at Bill and Effie's, which is Boomtown today. He stayed there fifteen or twenty years until his death. We had a couple of other guys working for us at one time or another, but I can't remember their names.

When I was not on the road I was on night call a lot, sort of like a doctor. Maybe late at night someone would call. I didn't like that and your mother didn't like it either. We might get a call from some bar and there would be a woman's voice in the background saying, "Hey, Jack, come out here and change the records!" Your mother would say, "You don't have to do it," but it was my job.

There were other problems as well. In our kind of business we were always getting involved with the owners of the locations. Sometimes it was to our advantage and guaranteed that we could keep our machines in a particular place. But at other times it wasn't that great because many of those people weren't very stable.

One day Judge Carville called me. He was an ex-governor, and after his term had ended he was back practicing law. I had

known him for a long time. He had his office in the First National Bank Building. I went to see him and he said, "Jimmy's in jail." Jimmy had worked for us in Hawthorne, and then he moved to Gabbs where he was tending bar. He did a good job for us and was a very likeable guy. So Carville said, "Jimmy's in desperate circumstances because there is a big charge against him—cattle rustling. They found two slain cows and they are accusing him. They say he's done it before, so they want to throw the book at him. He's got his wife and two children there in Gabbs." Carville said that they wanted to postpone the trial for four or five months to cool off tempers. But Jimmy would have to stay in jail unless he posted $2,000 bail. He had told Carville to call me.

With Jimmy in jail he couldn't work and take care of his wife and kids, so I posted his bond. For awhile Jimmy was around Gabbs and sometimes in Reno. Then I stopped hearing from him. Carville called me one day and said, "Jimmy's trial is next week and he's not around Gabbs. I don't know where he is. If he doesn't show up you might lose your bond money." Well, that got my full attention, because it was an awful lot of money in those days.

Your mother and I went up to Gabbs to look for him and there was no Jimmy. He'd been gone for a month or two. He had a sister there and I went to see her. She said, "Well, he just left and I don't know where he went." I explained about how I was going to lose my bond and she said, "Maybe he's afraid of going to jail." "Well, if he comes back we can all testify as to his character and maybe get him off." She said they had an uncle in Boston and another who was a baker in San Antonio, Texas. She didn't have an address for either one. So that's all the information I got out of Gabbs. Louie gave me a bad time for going Jimmy's bail. We were both on the hook—it was a Nevada Novelty Company check that I wrote—and he was upset. He said Jimmy was no good. "Well, that's beside the point now. We've got to find him! I'm getting on an airplane to Texas."

It was May, and when I got to San Antonio the weather was terrible. I had never been so hot in my life. It was an awful,

humid heat. I could barely breathe. I had the uncle's name from Jimmy's sister so I started looking up bakers. I went all over, but no luck. Finally, one nice baker suggested that I go see the wholesale flour companies. I did that and one guy said, "That name is familiar." He directed me to a bakery, and sure enough they knew Jimmy's uncle. They gave me an address. I went there and knocked, but there was no answer. I went across the street to a little park and sat there until late at night waiting for someone to show up, but nobody did.

I went back for maybe two or three nights, and then finally there was a light on. I pounded on the door and a man answered. I said, "I'm a friend of Jimmy's. I'm from Reno and he told me to look him up. I guess you must be his uncle. I've got some good news for him."

"Well, I'm his uncle, but I don't know where he is." I got him to give me the telephone number of the other uncle in Boston. I called it and a woman answered.

"Is Jimmy there? I'm a good friend of his."

She said to wait just a minute, and then Jimmy was on the phone. I told him, "Judge Carville says your case is coming up in a few days. He says he's going to beat the charges. I imagine you're coming back for the trial."

"Well, I haven't been in touch with the judge for a long time."

I said, "I don't want you to get into more trouble. If you don't come back you'll be on the lam from now on. They'll be looking for you and I'll be looking for you."

"Well, I don't have any money."

So I said, "I'll send money to the Greyhound Bus depot in Boston for your ticket. I'll get back to you."

So I called Carville in Reno and he found out that you could send the money to the bus company. I said, "I don't want Jimmy to get the money himself. I don't want him to be able to turn that ticket in." The Reno Greyhound office worked that out; the ticket was only good for travel. So I called Jimmy and said, "Your ticket is at the Greyhound Bus depot. Call me at home

when you get to Reno and I'll pick you up." What I didn't tell him was that I was supposed to take him to the penitentiary.

So I met him at the depot and he said, "Boy, I just feel bad about running away."

"Look, it's all set, Jim. We've been working on this for a long time, but first you have to turn yourself in. You'll be in there a day or two and then you'll get out."

"What?!"

"You have to do it that way Jimmy, otherwise it won't work. Don't try to run away now. If I can't hold you I'll call a cop. If you run away I'll tell the police you're on the lam."

"You wouldn't do that."

"The hell I wouldn't. You ran away with my money; the state is going to keep it unless you give up."

He got into my car and we drove to Carson. I went right up to the gates of the penitentiary and started honking my horn. The guard came out and I said I was delivering a prisoner. So he let me drive in and I asked to see whoever was in charge. I explained who Jimmy was, and that he was there to turn himself in. I said he had given up willingly. Well, he had his trial a week later. He got off and we got our bond money back. He beat the charge and I never saw him again.

I met several of the key players in northern Nevada gaming. The Reno old guard, men like Bill Graham, Jim McKay and George Wingfield didn't really know me from Adam. I was part of a younger generation. McKay knew my father, of course, because before he came to Reno he owned the Cobweb Bar in Tonopah and Father was one of his regulars. After he came to Reno McKay went into business with Bill Graham. They controlled prostitution here and they had the Bank Club in the basement of Wingfield's Golden Hotel. McKay was a dark-complected, good-looking guy. About five feet six inches tall, a little chubby. He married some kind of movie actress. Graham came out of Winnemucca. He was a tall, cowboy type of guy. Very tough. He shot a guy in Douglas Alley. They gave him something like a five-dollar fine. Graham owned several bars around Reno.

Graham and McKay had the reputation for working hot money for the gangster element in the Middle West and East. If you were in trouble and could get to Reno the word was you should go and see Graham and McKay. Pretty Boy Floyd, Ma Barker, Babyface Nelson were some of the names. Graham and McKay were kind of a clearing house. I'm not sure how it got to be that way.

Wingfield had the Riverside Bank, which was in the Riverside Hotel. Joe Fuetsch, Eddie 's brother, worked there as a cashier. It wasn't a big bank. Roy Frisch was the manager and Graham and McKay had some sort of arrangement with him. Frisch was scheduled to testify in court. A few nights before the date he left his house to go to the movies and has never been seen since. They say one of those gangster friends of Graham and McKay probably killed Frisch. A few days later Joe Fuetsch quit his job and went to California. He was probably scared; he's never been back.

Graham and McKay had lots of influence. You had better not cross them or something might happen to you. They pretty much dictated to the city council, too. Guisti was a councilman and he worked for Graham, he wasn't related to the Tonopah Guistis. Pop Southworth knew McKay from Tonopah. He knew Wingfield, too. Wingfield wasn't a gangster but he was over everybody, the king. Wherever Pop Southworth wanted the cigarette machines he got them. He had his machines all over town. He had connections.

Eventually, Graham and McKay went to jail for three or four years—federal prison. It was for money laundering or receiving stolen property. But when they got out they went right back to running the Bank Club. In those days there were hardly any rules or controls.

Of course, I knew Bill Harrah. Bingo was a game that they used to play in this town. It was a big deal on Virginia Street. Most of those operators, like Harrah, came from California. They were run out of there for giving away cash prizes. He was from Ventura. So Harrah had his bingo parlor next to Harold Smith's place. Two doors down some Japanese had the biggest

bingo place—two store fronts wide. Beyond that there was another single-front bingo parlor—and so forth.

The game was different in those days. You sat at a long counter and they had this box on wheels that had eighty numbered holes in it. They moved the box from player to player, and you tried to throw a ball into the hole with the number you needed. You weren't allowed to stand up and reach in. The players took turns throwing a ball until someone got bingo. That's how they called the game. It cost ten cents a card. The size of the prize depended on how many players there were—maybe five dollars. It was a real corny game. Bill's place was called Harrah's Heart Tango. I don't know where he got that.

In the back facing on the alley, behind the bingo parlor, Harrah had a real dark little bar called the Blackout. It had this popular piano player, Jackson, and I would go over all the time to listen to him. I got to know Bill that way, because he used to hang out there. Sometimes he'd buy a round, usually just by waving his hand or pointing. He wasn't a very verbal guy. He would say about three words and then just sit there and stare off in space.

He never got drafted into the army like the rest of us. After the war started my cousin Thurman Robb came through town in his uniform on his way home to Tonopah. He had something wrong with his stomach, and they gave him a medical discharge. We were living on Martin Street by then, so we put him up for the night. We decided to go out on the town. The Duncan sisters had a nightclub, what was later called Lawton's, west of Reno on the river. It was a real popular spot. They had a restaurant and orchestra. So we went to the Duncan Sisters' River House.

Well, Bill Harrah was single half the time and married half the time. He went through a lot of women, maybe seven wives. He was a ladies' man, but instead of just shacking up he would marry them. He must have been single that night because he was cruising. I had a Packard Clipper automobile, green, and Harrah had one exactly like it. When he saw my car parked out front of the River House he came in looking for me. We were eating

dinner and he came over and said, "Douglass, I see you've got your car out front."

I asked him to sit down and have a drink with us. I introduced him to Thurman and told him about his medical discharge. Harrah said, "Yeah, well, congratulations on getting out." Then he started talking about how his car was more powerful than mine. I said, "I think they are exactly alike. They sure look alike."

"Yeah, but mine's got a bigger motor."

I said, "I didn't even know Packard had a special big motor."

"Oh yes, they made just a few. I found mine in Los Angeles and it's got the big motor."

It seemed like maybe he wanted to have a drag race or something, so I just said, "I'll take your word for it, Bill."

So then Harrah said to me, "I'll tell you one thing, you and I will never go into the army."

"How do you know?"

He said, "It [the war] is not going to last that long."

Well, I ended up in the army but he never did. A few weeks later he was driving that Packard Clipper south on Second Street. He must have been doing eighty miles an hour and he missed the curve onto the bridge by the police station. He put that car right into the metal abutments. He was all bloody, almost dying. He broke his back and neck. He was in a cast for a year and a half. So, of course, he never did go into the army.

When the war broke out those Japs next to Harrah disappeared. I don't know if they sent them to the camps in California, but they were pushed out. They went from having the best bingo game in town to packing their suitcases. Harrah took charge of their place. They never came back. So suddenly Harrah was the biggest bingo operator in Reno. And then he kept expanding. Next door to the old Block N there was a place called the Frontier Bar. Just before the war I was offered that place for $75,000, but it might as well have been a million. Joe Hobson, Pick's brother, bought it. Harrah and Hobson were splitting the business. According to the story I heard, one night

Bill Harrah walked next door with a pocketful of money, put it on the Twenty-one table and said to Joe, "Either you are going to buy me out or I'm going to buy you out!" So Joe sold to Bill and made a killing. Harrah bought three or four bars around town, too. He had Leon and Eddie's for awhile.

When I got back from the army I used to run into Bill a lot. He was a barhopper and I might see him when I was running my route. He would invite me to have a drink. I tried to talk him into letting me put a few machines in his place, but he thought they might take some business away from his bingo game. So I knew him on a pretty casual basis, not as a friend. Actually, Bill didn't have friends. If he ever had one it was Bob Ring. Ring came to Reno with Harrah, and was still working at Harrah's as an executive when Bill died. Bill was a little bit strange. He would just sit in silence and stare. He looked very stern—like a preacher.

Bill always seemed to have money, but we couldn't figure out where he got it. Someone said, "It's got to be his father. His father must be rich." But then Bill's father came to Reno to live with him. He was an elegant old gentleman, but certainly not rich. I guess Bill just made his money; particularly when we were in the service. That's when the government closed "the stockade," the cribs. They didn't want the servicemen going to prostitutes. Well, they put maybe sixty girls on the street instead, and they went into the bars. There were lots of servicemen around with money. For a while Reno was a really wide open town. I was over in New Guinea so I didn't see it myself, but I heard about it. Guys like Harrah were in a great position to take advantage of the opportunity.

Anyway, we had our Mills distributorship. When Harrah started putting in slots, his own, I tried to sell him some. Jimmy Hammond had the Pace machine. It was real cheap. Bill said to me, "You know I owe Hammy a lot. He carried me at different times." Hammond got his machines into Harrah's, maybe fifty. So I never really did business with Bill Harrah.

I knew the Smiths at Harold's Club, not Pappy but more his sons. After the war I got some machines into their place, but only

for awhile. In those days slot machines were incidental in a casino. The table games were the real action. They might have five slot machines over in the corner for wives and girl friends to play while their men gambled. So the house didn't mind putting in someone else's equipment. While I was in the army Stan Smith (no relation) and Paul Elcano had a slot route, and they got Harold's Club to put in five or ten of their machines. I don't know how the hell Smitty stayed out of the army because he was a big, strong guy. They made a lot of money in Harold's Club. Louie was too busy just keeping up, so we weren't able to expand. But Smith and Elcano didn't last in the business for long, because it was wartime and you couldn't get equipment any longer. After the war they went into the sporting goods business—Sierra Sporting Goods—on Second Street near the Nevada Novelty Company.

After the war we had two or three fifty-cent machines in Harold's Club. Then I sold them some equipment, too, when they decided to run their own. But their slot mechanic told the Smiths that the Pace was a better machine than the Mills or Jennings, so Hammond got the business—maybe three, four, five hundred machines. Later it turned out that the mechanic only knew how to fix Paces!

Harold's Club started just like Harrah's as a bingo parlor. But then they put in table games. They were the first to open up gaming as acceptable entertainment. They put glass on the front of their place so you could see in from the street. The Bank Club, the Palace Club and the few others always did business behind closed doors. That was a real innovation. They put mice and rabbits in the window to attract people. Those rabbits would race around and catch people's attention. I think they might have fed them something funny. They took over the Giant Sandwich Shop next door and sold hamburgers, hot dogs and milkshakes.

Harold's was the first to hire women dealers. The men gamblers all thought, "Women dealers! Hell, I can beat those women!" So people would go there because they thought they could win. The story goes that everybody was stealing from

Harold's Club, too. The dealers sometimes had confederates. Harold's had to win their money three times in order to keep any of it. But it became so popular that some of the money stayed with the house eventually.

Everybody loved Pappy Smith. He would get on the airplane back from San Francisco and walk up and down the aisles introducing himself and giving out free meal tickets for his club. Whenever you hit a jackpot at Harold's they rang a bell. If Pappy saw someone he knew playing the slots he might walk over and pull the cord a couple of times and pay out two jackpots. Whenever he or his son Harold needed walking-around money they might go get some chips to shill a game. But if they won they cashed in and kept the money. It was skimming. The State of Nevada got very upset and put in a law that you couldn't gamble in your own place—the "Harold Smith Law." In those days the guys in Carson didn't really have many rules, they didn't know what the hell was going on.

My friend Stan Smith went to work at Harold's Club after he left the sporting goods business. They put him on the road. I used to go with him to the Bay area for a vacation. Stan had an expense account and he paid for our hotel and meals. We might go salmon fishing in the day and at night we played gin rummy with his friends. Stan was supposed to collect bad checks. So he would go to somebody's house and introduce himself. He would say "I have your check but the bank wouldn't cash it. Harold's would like to know if you're having problems. We would like to get our money." Sometimes the guy would pay up or write another check. But if he was having a bad time he might tell Stan a hard-luck story. Stan would say, "Well, if you ever get back on your feet we would appreciate getting our money. Meanwhile, you keep this." And he would give the guy $50, $75 or $100; he was authorized to do that! So Harold's Club built tremendous good will. Nothing in Nevada compared to Harold's Club; not in all of Las Vegas. They put signs up all over the world: "Harold's Club, Reno, or Bust." They put signs on Highway 40 for years when it was a terrible two-lane road

saying, "Make this Four Lanes." They did so much for Reno. They should build a monument to the Smiths.

I knew Harold, Sr. much better than Pappy. We played gin rummy a few times together. He might set up the game on one of the tables at his place and then get called away and never come back. Sometimes he would just take off for a couple of days of drinking and gambling. He might take money from his place and go to the Mapes Hotel and lose it. Then he could be off to Tahoe.

Harold was a real colorful guy. He was more of a carnival man than Pappy. He would walk into the bank to make a deposit and maybe say to the teller, "I'm Harold Smith, owner of the best club in the country. We're proud to do business with this bank."

Harrah started his car rally every summer and the old car buffs would come to town. They'd block off Virginia Street and part of Second to display them. Harrah gave out prizes, hosted a big dinner and sponsored a rally up to Lake Tahoe or someplace. They had a parade with those old cars down Virginia Street. One year Harold showed up with a little pedal car. He had on a cap and goggles. There was a sign on the side of his little toy car that said something like "Smith's Old Car Collection." Harold pedaled right down Virginia Street as part of the parade.

Harold was a big New York Yankees fan. When they made it to the World Series he would put on his Yankee uniform. One year he got uniforms for twelve or thirteen guys. They had bats and balls, too. They went through all the bars in town cheering for the Yankees. Harold was that kind of guy—a real carnival barker.

I knew Raymond I. Smith pretty well. He was different than his brother Harold. He was more retiring. Your mother knew his wife, maybe from the Twentieth Century Club. We used to go out to dinner with them once in awhile. They would send us a Christmas present. He was very interested in boxing. He had some boxers. He wasn't a character like Harold Sr. or Harold Jr., either.

I knew Harold Jr. very well. He was right out of his father's mold. For awhile Harold Sr. was romancing the singer Kay Starr. He bought her an expensive fur coat. Harold Sr. was taking her out, only Harold Jr. was sleeping with her! It was a family row when Harold Sr. found out. Harold Jr. was a real party animal in his early years. Then he went to Yugoslavia and started a casino. He barely got out. He claimed that once he had made some money the government tried to arrest him to confiscate it. He lost everything there; he barely made it over the border about two hours ahead of the police.

Harold Jr. was a real likeable guy. Later, when I was in the Club Cal-Neva, he came to see me. By then the Smith family was out of Harold's Club and Harold Jr. wasn't a big shot any longer. He said, "I'm desperate. I need a job. Nobody in this town will hire me, just because I'm a Smith. I floated some paper, wrote some bad checks, screwed around a lot. But if you'll hire me, I promise I will do better." I said, "Fine, but if you make one bad move you're out." My partner Warren Nelson didn't want to hire him at all. Well, he turned out to be a wonderful employee. He started as a dealer and then became a pit boss. He brought in a lot of business. By then Summa owned Harold's Club, and when old customers asked about the Smiths and found out that Harold Jr. was with us they would come to the Club Cal-Neva to say hello to him. He became a part of my gin rummy group for awhile. We played cards together every Wednesday night.

I met Dick Graves through our connections with the Picadilly Bar. Bob Armstrong, a real nice fellow, came to Reno right after the war. His family had a bar in Washington state in some small town that was going downhill. So he wanted to buy a bar here. Mixson and Harbert were interested in selling the Picadilly, but Armstrong couldn't afford it. It was a real good location for our machines, so Nevada Novelty agreed to buy half interest. I don't remember the price, maybe $25,000 for our half. So we were his partner, but Bob was not a very good operator. If someone came in he would buy him a drink and then just talk with that one guy rather than serve the other customers.

John Hickock was around all the time, and I said, "Why don't you take Bob out of here?" So John did and we had twenty or twenty-five slot machines in there. John ran it for a while.

Then, in the early 1950s, some guys from Idaho came to town and they wanted to buy some equipment. We had a surplus because we had purchased quite a bit from a source in Texas. That's when they passed the law that you couldn't move equipment across state lines to a place where gambling was illegal. You could bring equipment into Nevada, but you couldn't send it out without a permit. We had a bunch of machines we didn't know what to do with, and those guys bought them. I think they probably smuggled them into Idaho. Anyway, they got interested in Reno and they bought the Picadilly from Hickock.

They had a friend in Idaho, Dick Graves, and after six or seven months he came to town. First he bought a place in Carson and called it the Nugget. Then he got another place in Yerington, but he closed it real fast. He bought the Picadilly, too, and we had to sell him our slot concession. He was an operator, so he didn't want our machines in there. But he bought some equipment from us, and we got to be good friends.

Then he bought a place in Sparks, on the west side of B Street, and called it the Nugget. It was a broken-down garage before he fixed it up. I told him he was crazy. He had a big advertising program—the "awful-awful sandwich" and the slogan, "You've got to send out winners to get players."

Well, Dick got in trouble with the IRS. He had to have a hearing in San Francisco. He had written off a lot of opening costs and advertising expenses in Sparks, and he was real aggressive with the depreciation schedule on his equipment. So he asked if I would go to San Francisco and testify for him. He put Josephine and me up in a suite at the St. Francis. I testified for half an hour. I said that when I first went to Sparks and saw maybe thirty machines sitting in that old garage, and no business, I thought Graves would go broke real fast.

After that I didn't hear from him for maybe a year. Then one day a tiny, battery-operated Sony television set arrived at

the house. It was from Dick Graves. You couldn't get them in this country. I called Dick and he invited me to lunch. He said, "I just made a trip to Japan and saw these little T.V. sets. I fell in love with them. I thought you might like one." I kind of protested that he shouldn't have done that, but he said, "You know I think I won my case on your testimony." I did him a big favor by calling him crazy in front of the judge! He was able to justify his advertising costs.

After Dick retired he travelled all over the world in a kind of camper van that he customized. One day I got a letter from him that he had posted from Yugoslavia. It was just a chatty note. What was of interest was the address. He had taken a photograph of me that appeared in some newspaper and pasted it on the front of the envelope along with the letters USA and my downtown zip code—89501. There was nothing else on the envelope. And, you know, the Post Office still managed to deliver that letter to me!

All the time I was getting more involved in the Reno scene. Your mother and I were in a golfing group with Leon and Jackie Nightingale, Karl and Flo Breckenridge, Clark and E-Ann Guild, John and Miriam Chism, Stan and Kay Smith, Bill and Alice Blakely, and Doug and Rita Busey. We had Scotch foursomes in which we would draw for partners. You would be paired up with a woman who was not your wife. We played one Sunday a month, nine holes, and then one of the couples would host a dinner at their house. It was a great thing that we all looked forward to. Then we started going together to Furnace Creek down in Death Valley every winter. We were close friends. Maybe four days a week I had lunch with Doug Busey, his partner Clark Guild, Howard Cunningham and some other lawyers.

Leon Nightingale lived in Oakland before he came to Reno. He had a bar down there, and maybe some other holdings. One of the most popular spots in Reno was Leon and Eddie's, which is part of the Club Cal-Neva's footprint now. (The Leon was Harbert, not Nightingale.) When Leon Nightingale came to Reno he bought that bar—I guess he liked its name. Later Leon

Harbert worked for me for a while and then he went to Vegas where he became some kind of big shot at the Last Frontier.

Leon Nightingale had just gone through a divorce before he came to town. He was a handsome guy, and the girls started chasing him. Then he met Jackie, who was a telephone operator working at the telephone building at First and Center. They got married. I first met Leon when I went to see him about putting machines in his place. His slots were from A. Benetti's, and he didn't want a jukebox. So we were only acquaintances. Then a Jewish guy, whose name I can't remember, came to me with a deal to buy a property on Virginia Street down by the courthouse. The idea was to put in a motel; motels were getting to be a hot proposition in those days. It turned out that Leon was going to be part of our group. We worked on the project for about a year and nothing came of it. But I got to know Leon better and we began to socialize. It was about then that we started our Scotch foursome. Leon sold his bar and bought the Stein, and Nevada Novelty was able to put a jukebox in there.

Doug Busey was my attorney. He was a Sigma Nu, but he had graduated before I went to college. He was the Nevada state tennis champion at one time. Doug was Reno's city attorney for a while. I think I might have met him through John Hickock. I was always involved in drawing up leases for our locations, so I needed an attorney for lots of small transactions. Doug was married to Rita. She was his secretary before he divorced and remarried. Rita was a Sparks girl.

Doug had his office in the Professional Building, which was located at Second and Center, where the pawn shop is today. It was Reno's best office address. We used to meet often in the late afternoon at the One Sixteen bar just down the block. I would meet Doug and John Hickock for a drink. Well, I wasn't much of a drinker so I probably had 7-Up or something. Doug liked to drink. It finally got to him and he died as a relatively young man.

Doug's partner was Clark Guild, Jr., the son of Judge Guild. I met him while I was in the army. Jack McCloskey told me about him. "Well, you know Junior's down here and he's already

a second lieutenant." Jack thought it was because of the judge's influence. I think Clark met his wife, E-Ann, when he was at Camp Roberts. She was from around there.

After the war Clark went to Washington, D.C. to get his law degree. He worked for one of the senators. We weren't particularly close at that time because there was a pretty big age difference between us. When you're thirty and the other guy's maybe twenty, that's a big gap. It was later that I got to know him better—through Doug Busey.

I knew Bill Blakely from school; he was a Sigma Nu. He was from an old Reno family. I think his father was in the wholesale grocery business. When I was at Zinkie's, Bill was working in a popular coffee shop in San Francisco. I used to go see him once in a while. Bill became an insurance man here in Reno. I bought some insurance from him. He married Mary Alice Loomis. She was the sister of Bud Loomis, a successful local attorney.

I had met Karl Breckenridge through Wayne Spencer before we all went to the Orient together. After our trip he stayed in Oakland working for the Kaiser Shipyards. We stayed in touch. Your mother and I visited Karl and his first wife. During the war, he divorced. Then one day after the war he showed up in Reno and told me he planned to move here and go into the real estate business. His mother lived here; she was married to a stock broker. Then he met his second wife, Flo. She wasn't from around here.

I met Stan Smith at the University; he was also a Sigma Nu. He was from Carlin. Actually, by the time he came to Reno I had quit school, but by then Oly Glusovich was attending and was a Sigma Nu. Oly sat out a year to work as a leaser in a mine in Tonopah to earn college money. Oly and Stan became good friends, and I met Smitty through Oly. After I was in business in Reno, but still not married, Oly, Stan and I ran around together. Then Stan met Kay. She had come here from New York to get a divorce and was working at J. C. Penney's. She planned to go back to the East to get married. But Stan changed her mind. Kay became your godmother.

So that was our social circle; and, as it turned out, it also gave me some of my key business contacts as well.

By the mid-1950s I was getting tired of the slot-route business. I was anxious to expand into other things. About 1957 or so I bought a building at 30 East Commercial Row—not for Nevada Novelty, for myself. At that time there was a group around Reno that was kind of notorious. They would hang around the Bank Club. Frankie Frost, Dave High and the Kid. They were macho guys, maybe junior gangsters. The Kid came here from someplace up north, and he gambled and drank pretty heavily. He had a reputation as a card cheat, though nobody ever said it to his face. One time he won some money and he bought that building. Upstairs it had a little sixteen-room hotel run by the Valencia family. Downstairs there was a bar and restaurant. Next door there was another bar, a pawn shop and a gypsy fortune teller: all part of the same complex. Those were the tenants.

One day the Kid told John Hickock, "I gotta sell my building. I want to move up to Washington."

I think we had the slots in one of the bars, so John came to me, and I asked how much the Kid wanted for his building.

"One hundred thousand, but I think you can get it for less."

So I mentioned it to Louie. I said, "I think we could get that building for $72,000 or maybe seventy-five.

Louie said, "I think you should buy it." (He didn't say "we.")

"Well, all I've got is maybe $35,000."

Louie said he knew Johnny somebody, an Italian guy, who could find the money. So Johnny came around to talk. He said he would charge me 2 percent to find me $45,000, a $900 commission. I agreed, and in a couple of days he had the money. So I went to Hickock and said, "Offer $70,000 minus your commission."

"He won't take it."

"So offer him $70,000 and I'll pay your commission."

"He won't take that either; maybe $72,000 will do it."

So I said, "Offer him the $72,000 and I'll give you $1,500 for your commission."

The Kid answered, "Get me the money in one week and it's a deal."

So I went to Johnny for the money. He said it was coming from old man Nannini. He ran a bar where the El Dorado is today. I had never been able to do business with him before. He wouldn't even talk to me about our equipment. We met at Washoe Title Company, next to City Hall on First Street, the only title company in town then. Josephine and I were supposed to meet Nannini and his wife to sign the papers. Nannini told me in broken English that for two years he only wanted an interest payment, nothing on the principal. That delighted me because I was worried about the payments. He was going to get 6 percent. I could pay everything off any time after the two years. So we signed the documents and Nannini dumped a paper bag he was carrying upside down on the table. There was $45,000 in fives, tens and twenties. So I got the building and the Kid got his money. He left town right away and I never heard of him again.

I had a tenant upstairs, the Valencias, at $250 a month. The Macks, the family that has the Palace Pawn Shop at Third and Virginia today, had the pawn shop for another $250. There was the Montana Bar. Jack Farley had that and we put in about 15 slots. He was a real fancy guy, but he couldn't stay away from the tables. He came to town in a $30,000 Cadillac and left in an $80,000 bus.

The gypsy fortune teller was Mrs. Rose Brown. She was a real fine lady. She had lots of jewelry and gold. All the family wore gold. They must've had money because she kept asking me if I wanted to sell the building. Pappy Smith used to go to her all the time to have his fortune read. Anyway, I remember that I had about $800 in rent altogether, which paid for the interest and then some.

So my building was pretty successful. Well, the Montana Bar had its ups and downs. It went through several wars. Jack Farley and his wife had put in a nice restaurant up front on Commercial Row, and the bar opened onto Douglas Alley. The

restaurant was successful, but not the bar. It went through several ownerships.

Then I put in a tenant in the Montana Bar, and he seemed to be doing a pretty good business. But he got into trouble with the Internal Revenue Service—he wasn't paying his taxes. He owed me a little rent, too. One night he called to tell me where the keys were. He said he was leaving town right then, and that I could try and sell the supplies in the bar to get some of my rent money. Before I could do anything the IRS padlocked the door. I went to see them and they said they had a right. I said, "I don't owe you any money. My tenant did, and he's gone."

"Well, we want to have an auction. We want to keep the place closed for ten days until we can auction off the supplies." I asked if they were going to pay rent, and they said they didn't have to do that.

I was really mad, so I went to see Doug Busey. He said I should cooperate. The IRS advertised, put a sign on the building, too, saying that on such-and-such a day at 10:00 a.m. everything in the place would be auctioned to the highest bidder. I said to the IRS, "You can't sell anything that's fastened down; it's part of the bar." We argued about the stools, but they weren't attached, so they had to go. We argued about the mirror behind the bar. They said it wasn't permanent, but I said it's screwed down, so finally they agreed it would stay. At first they wanted to sell everything, including the bar, but we made some compromises. They even divided the open liquor bottles into lots for auction. One lot was a case of toilet paper.

Most of the stuff was garbage, but I went to the auction to see if I could use anything to help reopen the bar—maybe the stools. So the auction started. There were quite a few people trying to pick up odds and ends. LaVere Redfield was there, and no matter what anybody bid he would go a bit higher. Redfield was notorious for attending auctions. I bid against him on the toilet paper just to push him higher. When they totalled the whole thing up it came to about $2,200. The rule was if you bettered the total for all of the individual lots you could get the

whole thing. So Redfield said, "I'll bid $2210 for everything," and he got it.

Redfield was really eccentric. He once got robbed for $3,000,000 cash that he had in his house. I knew his stockbroker, Howdie Umber, and he told me about going down in Redfield's basement one time. It was full of foodstuffs—canned milk, canned corn, a fantastic array of cheeses; you name it. Howdie said one time the Safeway store had a sale on cheese. They advertised it in the newspaper. The ad had the price wrong; it inverted the seven and three so it read thirty-seven cents a pound. When the store opened Redfield was the first one in. He went to the lady cashier and said, "Where's the cheese? I want to buy all of it." The price at the display was seventy-three cents, but he insisted on the thirty-seven cents in the paper and they had to give it to him! That's the kind of guy he was. You could write two books about Redfield.

Anyway, I got another tenant in the Montana Bar. He had a bartender who worked for him for a long time. Once in a while, when someone paid for a drink, the bartender would flip that coin. If it came up one way he put it in the cash register; if not, it went in his pocket. The proprietor knew about it. He had his office upstairs in the back with a window that looked right down on the bar. One day when he was watching, a customer paid for his drink, and the bartender put the coin in his pocket without flipping it. The proprietor went down to the bar and said, "What's the matter? Aren't we partners any more?"

About this time John Cavanaugh moved from Tonopah to Reno and began to make real estate investments. He was having some problems with his partner in his Park Terrace deal, a low-cost housing project on Sutro Street. I bought out John's partner's interest and we were in business together. We began acquiring more real estate in the area. We ended up with a gravel pit where the I 80-U.S. 395 "Spaghetti Bowl" interchange is today. We sold that land to the Highway Department. We also bought the Kornmeyer Ranch along both sides of what is today Oddie Boulevard and developed Silverado Manor, some trailer courts, the Montgomery Ward site and some other commercial

real estate there. So I was branching out quite a bit in my business interests.

The first real vacation I ever took was a trip to South America with your mother and the Cavanaughs. I think you were in high school and we were gone for a few weeks. The Cavanaughs had some friends in Lima and also in Brazil that they wanted to visit, and we were going along for the ride. Before we left Paul Elcano came to see me at Nevada Novelty. He and Stan Smith had a slot business briefly during the war, and somehow Paul had received an inquiry from a man named José Tarantuty of Buenos Aires who wanted to promote slot machines in his country. I agreed to meet with Tarantuty and sent him a letter. José met us at the airport. He was a bit younger than I and spoke good English with an Oxford accent. I think he was some kind of wholesaler of imported goods.

Argentina had had a revolution about a year earlier. Perón had been thrown out of office and the military had taken over. They were still forming their government. The ministers were all military men. José said that a general had just been made the president of the *lotería*. He was in charge of all forms of gambling in the country. There were two casinos in Mar del Plata, but all table games. José thought we might be able to put some slot machines in there. He wanted to be my partner.

We had an appointment to meet with the general. They showed John, José and me into a very fancy office and there was this distinguished looking, grey-haired man. He didn't speak one word of English, so José had to translate while I tried to explain slot machines. I had photographs of the interior of Harold's Club with people playing slots. My proposal was that we wanted to import maybe 200 or 250 machines and slot parts to Argentina. We also needed to bring in one or two pickups and a station wagon. We wanted a three year contract to operate the machines in Mar de Plata on a 50-50 basis. At the end of the three years we would turn over everything to the government. One condition was that we be allowed to convert our profits into dollars and take them out of the country. They had some kind of Mickey Mouse currency down there. Through José the general said, "I

don't know anything about gaming, but I have my right hand man in Mar del Plata. You go see him."

The general made the arrangements for us. Josie and Marge stayed in Buenos Aires to see the opera while John, José and I took off one evening for Mar del Plata. It was about ninety miles. It wasn't much of a highway, like the road between Reno and Tonopah. I remember the trip well because Cavanaugh was a big eater. He began complaining about being hungry. So José stopped at this popular place that was kind of a truck stop. It was pretty simple and rough-looking, but it had a big dining area. So we ordered steaks and they were absolutely huge. They were thick and hung over the edge of the plate. They were twice as big as anything I could have eaten—maybe four pounds. I paid for dinner and those steaks were fifty cents apiece!

We got to Mar del Plata and had reservations. There were two huge fifteen-story buildings, both hotels, connected by a level of stores. Each building had its own casino. They were separate but also joined together and were under one management. Next morning we went through the area. The casinos were closed. The public area was huge, nearly as big as the casino in the Reno Hilton. I counted forty-five double roulette wheels—ninety layouts. Then they had maybe thirty chemin-de-fer tables and some kind of poker game as well. They were open from 4:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m.

We met with the manager, but he was real busy and asked to see us the next day. He wanted to hear our proposition. Mar del Plata has a lovely beach and lots of shops. It was a major tourist area. I was particularly interested in what the crowds would be like at night in the casinos. Everything starts late down there. We ate in a restaurant and went to a casino about 8:00 p.m. It was about a third full. It was totally quiet, very formal. You could hear the balls spinning in the wheels—not like a Nevada casino at all.

About two hours later the place was packed. The ladies were in beautiful costumes and most of the men were in ties and jackets. It was a very fancy crowd. I asked José where they all came from? According to the law you were supposed to be a

foreigner to gamble. You had to show your passport to get in. But José said the best-dressed people were Argentines. They had a way of getting around the rule.

The next day we met with the manager. We showed him our pictures. He had heard of slot machines but had never seen one. I told him about how well they were doing in Nevada. He was intrigued. He said that he had plenty of room. He showed us some possible space. Of course, in those days the machines weren't electric, so you could put them anywhere. He said he would contact *el general* in Buenos Aires, his boss.

Back in Buenos Aires we met again with the general. He said they were favorably impressed but couldn't go for the deal. They were a poor country and the condition of being able to take out our money was the deal breaker. We also went with Tarantuty to Montevideo for a day and met with some officials there. It was pretty much the same story.

I was disappointed, since I had never been in the casino business before. Up until then I was a slot route operator, but I knew that with an exclusive in Mar del Plata we were going to get rich. I could see the class of player they had. We could have made five dollar tokens and had great play when there were very few one dollar machines here in Nevada. I thought we could have maybe fifty machines exclusively for high-roller play. Anyway, I stayed in touch with Tarantuty for a while. He kept writing and tried to talk me into making a deal whereby we would leave our money in Argentina. But that was unacceptable, so nothing ever came of it.

In 1959 I decided to sell my interest in Nevada Novelty. Louie's son Joe was working for us, and I could see Louie wanted him to have more responsibility. He was nice and all, but I could tell I was now in business with Louie's son whether I liked it or not. We had Roy Donatelli and Gabe Gabrielli working for us, and I knew that Roy wanted to own a piece of the business.

Anyway, it was getting to be a family thing, too much weighted on the Benetti side. It was more or less an Italian deal as well, except for me. So I sat down with Louie and said,

"Look, there's a lot of Benettis. You've got more children, little Louie. Everybody's nice, but I think it might be better if I sold out. Then Joe could come in and Roy could have a piece. I'm in other things. John Hickock and I have some deals. I can do other things." So that was it. I sold my half for I think $200,000. Roy took $40,000 of it—one fifth of my half. Whatever was in the bank account, we split. We usually had from $30,000 to $40,000 in the bank.

By then we had sold most of our bars—we were just an operating company. The business was getting tougher, too, because some of our locations were buying their own machines. If a place did well there was always that danger. Louie was happy because he wanted to go into the cigarette business. I had promised Pop Southworth that we wouldn't when he gave us some locations. He was a big tobacco supplier. With me out, Nevada Novelty could distribute cigarettes. Anyway, we must have had a few contracts, or whatever, because for a few years after the sale Louie was paying me my share—maybe $3,000 or $4,000 a year. Roy didn't have the cash, so he didn't finish paying me off until a few years after I was in the Club Cal-Neva. He paid half down and the rest on time. Anyway, they bought me out. There was nothing strained about it. Louie and I remained good friends until the day he died.

So now I was unemployed. One night we were at the Cavanaughs' for dinner and Max Dunn was there. Max was one of the VIPs on the committee that was formed to put on the 1960 Squaw Valley Winter Olympics. He was in charge of pulling them together. He was building his team. John said to Max, "Why don't you hire Douglass? He has just sold his business. He can do you some good up there. He's got some time."

"Well sure, Mr. Douglass, if you want to work with me I would appreciate it."

I said, "Look, I don't know anything about the Olympics. I don't know what they do."

"We need organization. Maybe you can help us with organization."

He went back to California and then wrote me with a job offer. He gave me the title "technical director," and I was going to make a thousand dollars a month. I would have to report at Squaw Valley every morning at eight o'clock. The honorary chairman was Prentis Hale; he owned a big department store in San Francisco and was an important figure there. He was our leader and fundraiser.

We began to have meetings. I didn't know what the hell I was doing, and neither did most of the other people there. Maybe thirty or forty people would sit in on the meetings—quite a few were Scandinavians with heavy accents. They were the technicians for ski runs and cross-country courses—things like that. So I learned by listening. Eventually, there must have been five or six hundred people working on various committees. I was in charge of fifty people, and forty-nine of them knew more than I did. We were responsible for cross-country details and the sauna baths. The Swedes wanted special ones. They would get all heated up and then go out in the snow and switch one another. It had to be the right kind of switch, too. We got them out of Finland. There were a lot of details like that.

Well, there was no snow and the Olympics were getting closer. We got the Indians from Pyramid Lake to come up and do a rain dance. We were really getting worried. But then four days before the opening ceremonies it started snowing, and the Winter Olympics were a great success.

Chapter Seven

A Casino Career

ACTUALLY, I RESIGNED my position with the Olympics committee as of January 1, 1960 and the Olympics started something like January 23. My job was pretty much over and I had been negotiating a deal for the Riverside Hotel. Roy Crummer had it. Crummer owned the nearby Cavalier Motel and then he bought the Riverside. Virgil Smith had its gaming concession. Crummer wanted to sell, and Smith was trying to put together a group to buy him out. Clark Guild was their attorney and he asked me to come into the Riverside. Virgil had been a former competitor of mine in the slot route business. So I said, "Well, it depends upon who is going in there. I have great faith in Virgil. He's honest and knows the business. If they put the right group together I might be interested." Harold Munley was going to be one of the partners, a junior one.

At that time Reno only had four real hotels. There was the Golden, the El Cortez, the Mapes and the Riverside. So I liked the idea. The Mapes was newer, but the Riverside had a fine tradition. It was known as "Reno's best address"—that was its advertising slogan. Before Crummer the two Wertheimer brothers owned the Riverside and also ran the Mapes. Mert Wertheimer operated them both. They were out of Los Angeles; I don't know if they had crime connections. Then Mrs. Mapes wanted her son Charlie to run the Mapes Hotel so she took it

back. Crummer bought the Riverside from the Wertheimers and put Lee Francovich in as the hotel manager—Virgil Smith had the gaming. I didn't realize it at the time, but under Crummer the property had been losing money, which is why he wanted to sell.

Crummer was asking five million dollars at no interest. Our payment was going to be $30,000 a month. The main partners were Dr. Franks, a dentist from Hollywood, and Don Levy, whose parents owned a department store in Phoenix. Dr. Franks had the biggest piece, maybe 30 percent. Sam Levy was his faithful follower. Virgil and I each had to put up $50,000 for 20 percent apiece. The other 30 percent was spread around. Anyway, Franks had the biggest part, but not controlling interest. We had the votes.

The state was getting tougher. They had just yanked Doc Statcher's license at the Bank Club. About 1956 or 1957 Doc Statcher came from the Midwest, bought the place and just started operating it. He never said boo to the gaming authorities. He didn't even apply for a license. I don't think he was ever a medical doctor, they just called him "Doc." He had this chorus-girl wife, or maybe lady friend, a real fancy dresser. You'd see her everywhere. He gathered people around him from the East or Midwest. One was David High, a slick-looking guy. Hollywood would cast him as a mobster. He just hung around and everybody knew he was Doc Statcher's man. Maybe a bodyguard, maybe a triggerman. You knew if you got on Statcher's case you better look out for High. Anyway, the state came in and closed Statcher down for not having a license. He hung around for a month or so and then left Reno.

In those days it was a lot easier to get licensed. You would just go to Carson and tell them what you were doing. I went to see Ed Olsen at Gaming Control and he said our deal couldn't be approved automatically. Bobby Kennedy was talking about looking into gaming, and they were nervous in Carson. Olsen said, "We know some of your guys and they could have problems. Crummer had a loan from the Teamsters." Well, that was true. Part of the $5,000,000 was to go to the Teamsters

Union. I said, "Come on, Ed, you know me." But he insisted that we have a formal hearing in Carson. We all had to appear.

Franks was upset. "Well, I can't understand why the state is after us. Just because I live in Los Angeles and just because I worked with Jimmy Contratto, who was no good!" Anyway, we had to go to Carson. As far as Smith, Munley and myself were concerned we didn't have much trouble, we were locals. I had been licensed many times before in our bars. But we had to jump through hoops to get the other guys on the license, which we finally did.

We opened the Riverside on January 1. Virgil Smith was the casino manager, Lee Francovich was the hotel manager, and I had some kind of title and office. I was a general manager, sort of the all-around honcho. I oversaw the office staff. Clark Guild bought me a thick book on hotel management and said, "Read it so you can learn something about this business." We managers each got fifty dollars a day in salary.

The Riverside was a great experience; it taught me a lot. But I didn't stay for very long. Dr. Franks didn't have control, but he had a big say. He would come up about every second weekend. We would have a meeting and he would harass everybody about this or that. He was always comping his friends into the hotel, too. He insisted on picking out the entertainment for our showroom, since he was down in Hollywood and said he knew everybody. He kept sending up entertainers. We had an orchestra and ten chorus girls. We hired performers like Ted Lewis, Kay Starr, Andy Williams, Ella Fitzgerald, the Will Mastin trio (the group Sammy Davis, Jr. sang with). The blacks couldn't stay in our hotel. They had to go to the black boarding houses down on Montello Street. Every time there was a black entertainer in town in those days that's the way it was.

Ann-Margret was a lounge act for us. She was from Dartmouth College and played on her school breaks. She had two young men with her. Her mother, a Swedish lady, came along as chaperone. Ann sang with the two guys as a trio. Later they were playing a lounge in Vegas and George Burns caught

their act. He told her to come to Hollywood and he would help her out. That's how she got her start.

Anyway, Harold Munley wanted us to hire his son, Emmett. Emmett had worked for the State Gaming Commission, but they let him go. He got into some kind of trouble over regulations, stepped over the edge, and they fired him. But he knew something about gambling and Hal was a partner, so we hired Emmett. I think he was an assistant pit boss. Well, I would come to work sometimes in the evenings and Dave High would be hanging around outside on the sidewalk. And half the time Emmett would be out there talking to him. Dave couldn't come in the place because of his reputation, but here's Emmett going out there. I didn't like it. By then I was making a list of other things I didn't like about the Riverside. Something was fishy. I got the feeling that maybe through Dave High and our minor partners Doc Statcher was investing. There was money I couldn't account for.

Also, we had all that expensive entertainment that we couldn't afford. Franks was booking it through Bill Miller in Las Vegas. Then Miller bought a piece of the Riverside. He was entirely different from Franks. He was an operator and knew the business. Shortly after he came to Reno he said to me, "This place is a real loser. It can't make it; we've got to make some changes."

So I went to Bill Miller and I said "Look, I want out. I'm uncomfortable here!" By then Harold Munley was out, but his son was still in. Hal hadn't sold, but he turned over everything to Emmett. I said, "I want my fifty thousand back and fifteen thousand dollars on top. Give me $65,000 and I'm gone. And if the group doesn't buy me out I'm going to Carson to tell them about my suspicions."

"Well, that's ridiculous. You shouldn't pay attention to all these rumors. But I'll talk to the rest of the group and see what we can do." So they fiddled around, but in about three weeks Miller called and said, "I can make out your check."

Actually, a month or two before I got out of the Riverside John Cavanaugh and Leon Nightingale came to the house and

asked if they could buy in. They each wanted to put in $50,000. I told them, "I wouldn't put any money in that thing. There's something wrong over there. I'm going to try to get out." Franks wanted their $100,000 infusion, and they thought it sounded like a good deal. But I talked them out of it. It certainly wouldn't be my last business dealing with Franks—or Leon and John either.

In those days you could start a gambling business with some partners, legitimate ones, and end up with others. I had my suspicions, but I didn't really have facts either. I had warmer feelings about Bill Miller than the rest. By then he was running the place. Basically, he was an entertainment man. So was his family. His son was the agent for Mick Jagger over in England. I trusted Miller to talk to the others. They probably thought I was some kind of square peg. I figured they would simply buy me out. I wasn't really concerned about physical harm. It was after the Kefauver Committee had gone through Nevada and everything was tightening up. I was concerned about my financial well-being and my reputation. Also we were getting behind in paying our bills, maybe sixty days. Virgil Smith had gotten out about three months after we opened; that bothered me too.

As far as I know I was the only one to get his money back, and with a profit besides. Everyone else lost. Shortly thereafter a guy from New York, who was in the cosmetics business, bought control. About fourteen months later the Riverside closed. It stayed that way for several years until Pick Hobson reopened it. So, even though I was a novice in the hotel business, I didn't get hurt. The beautiful Riverside was just overloaded with people drawing money and expensive floor shows.

Years later, when it was closed, I made an offer on it. The Teamsters still had the paper. They were the first to lend money to Nevada casinos. The banks wouldn't touch them. Thank goodness for the Teamsters, because they opened up a whole new era. Virgil Smith wanted to try to reopen the Riverside, and we had another partner, I can't remember his name. I sent a telegram to the Teamsters offering $2.2 million. They didn't

even answer it. So I got a telephone number, called, and they said, "We're not interested in any local groups." It stayed closed for a couple of more years, and I don't know what kind of a deal they finally made.

So, anyway, I was out of Nevada Novelty and I was out of the Riverside. But I was involved in another project with John Hickock—starting up Home Savings and Loan. I first met John when he had the Verdi Inn. Louie and I had two or three slot machines in there and they did a fair business. But the rest of his operation wasn't too strong; and then he had a fire. Everything burned up, including our machines. Hickock went to California and I didn't see him for awhile. Then one day I ran into him on the street in Reno and he said, "I haven't had a chance to talk to you since the fire. I hope you had some insurance."

"Well, no, we didn't."

So he said, "I feel real bad about that. I'm going to open a real estate office in this town. I'll have some deals and I'll keep you in mind. You might make your money back." He opened his office and was very active. For many years he was the main promoter of Washoe City real estate. He had an office out there and he made some money. He also owned the Picadilly Bar for a short time.

I liked John, he was an idea man. He wanted to build a hotel/casino at the Virginia City turnoff on South Virginia. That was many years ago, and now maybe Sam's Town is going to do something there. An Italian owned those ninety acres, and we had a lot of meetings with him. Walker Boudwin, the big contractor, was involved. But the seller wanted $4,000 an acre and we thought it was too much money. John was always looking for opportunities like that. I remember we went up to the Feather River area together to look at some other property.

Then he came to me with an idea to start a savings and loan company. They were getting to be popular. Reno was growing and it only had two—Union Federal and American Federal. Union Federal was long-established; I think it started in 1890 or something like that. A federal savings and loan was owned privately, but the government insured the savings accounts for

a maximum of $10,000 at that time. If something happened to the savings and loan the government would give the depositor his money back up to $10,000. To get permission and that insurance you had to qualify. You had to put up so much money and you had to have an organization.

I think the minimum investment was $500,000, and you could sell shares to investors to raise that seed money. So we were out beating the bushes selling the stock. The smallest investment we would accept was $2,500. We sold stock to John Chism, Tom Beko, Stan Smith, Louie Benetti, John Cavanaugh and his brother Charlie, and a lot of others. My investment was $90,000. I think the Cavanaughs took $25,000 each. There was a rancher in California who bought $200,000 worth. He had been in the savings and loan business and made money at it. Doug Busey bought in and so did Clark Guild. So we put together $500,000, and then we needed a location.

I owned a piece of property at First Street and Roff Way that I had bought through John Hickock for $65,000. When I took over that building there was a very picturesque attorney upstairs, John Shaw, and a quacky doctor downstairs with some kind of x-ray machine. There was also a Christian Science reading room downstairs. That attorney came to me and said, "I want that guy downstairs out! I'm fifty-four years old. I've had a couple of wives and I have several girl friends. Every time that guy fires off that machine I lose one piece of ass. He shoots that x-ray all the time while I'm sitting at my desk. He's killing me!"

I said, "You know, I bought the building from him and he's got a lease."

Anyway, both of them moved out right away. The doctor sold to me because he wanted to retire. And then my attorneys, Busey and Guild, said they wanted to be my partners—to own half the building and use the upstairs for their offices. We decided we could put Home Savings and Loan downstairs.

We still didn't have our permit, and there was a lot of red tape involved. We had to go before the state and then the federal government. Some guy in California had American Savings and he was a real promoter. He started opening lots of branches, and

then he tried to move into Arizona. That triggered a reaction from the banks, so the government ruled that you could only have one branch and you couldn't cross state lines. Eisenhower was president and he wanted an immediate moratorium on interstate savings and loans. Later they changed the rule about branches, but you still had to operate in just one state.

Anyway, it took about six months to get the state permit and then we had to convince the federal government to approve us. We got our U.S. senators to write letters vouching for us as long-time Nevadans. We kept sending more letters of recommendation, but nothing happened. Then, out of the blue, John Hickock got a telegram that we had been approved. It happened that he was sick at the time, so I took the telegram to Carson City. The state officials congratulated me, and within a week we had all our permits in place.

We opened our office in my building at the corner of First Street and Roff Way. John hired a general manager out of California and a woman who was both the secretary and vice president. They both had experience in the business. I had a desk there, some kind of title and a minimal salary. We had a grand opening and gave away prizes to anyone who became a depositor. We had household appliances stacked all over the place as giveaways. A couple of hundred people showed up—many of them were our friends. They put $500, $1,000, $5,000 into their new accounts. We began making loans on houses. We couldn't afford an appraiser, so Ray, the manager, taught me how to appraise real estate. Helen was teaching me about the savings and loan business, too. It was a good learning experience and I found it to be very interesting.

About this same time Leon Nightingale came to me. He was trying to put together a deal to take over the Club Cal-Neva at Second and Center. My former partner, Dr. Franks, and his partners, Sam Levy and Al Rocco (some kind of movie director), owned it. It had once been the Club Fortune, which was run by a Jewish guy—Zemansky. He had a bar, a Twenty-one table, a roulette game and a wheel of fortune. For Reno it was kind of a fancy place. Its restaurant had white tablecloths and a nice

menu; it was about $2.50 for dinner. If we saved up for a while your mother and I might have a night out there. The tables surrounded a stage. Liberace and his brother George played there a few times.

Then Zemansky sold out to Sam and his partner. They were from Los Angeles and had the Cal-Neva Lodge at Lake Tahoe. So they changed the name of the Club Fortune to the Club Cal-Neva. They had a long bar backed by a huge blue mirror with the outline of Lake Tahoe etched in it. They were treating the Reno Club Cal-Neva as an annex of the Cal-Neva Lodge.

They weren't in there for long. They operated for a summer, and at the end of September put up a sign that said something like "Good luck Reno, see you in the spring!" They closed the place for the winter. Bill Ligon was a powerful councilman and that made him and the rest of the council real mad. He swore that those operators would never get a business license again. He thought it was terrible that they only wanted to operate seasonally and then lay everybody off.

So then Jimmy Contratto took over the Cal-Neva. Leon Nightingale and another guy were his partners. Contratto put in a good restaurant and made the Cal-Neva into a real gaming house. But he was used to getting his way, so he took out his partners. He was running it by himself.

At that time Leon had The Stein, which was a very popular spot. It was in the location of the old Club One Sixteen, right across from city hall and near the Gazette building. Reno's main professional building was at Second and Center. The Stein had a hofbrau and bar; it became a real popular hangout for Reno's power brokers. I never got very close to politics, but Leon knew all the right people. They hung around his place.

Contratto parked his Cadillac in the Reno Garage, which was on Center Street next to the river. So he walked right by The Stein every day going to the Club Cal-Neva, and he was still friends with Leon. He dropped into The Stein a lot to say hello. One day he said, "I'm having trouble with Dr. Franks. He wants more rent. My lease is about up, but I'm going to fool those guys. I'll wait until winter and then close down. That will make Ligon

mad, and Franks will never get the Club Cal-Neva reopened." As a guess I'd say Contratto was paying $6,000 a month rent and Franks wanted $10,000.

Contratto shut down the Club Cal-Neva just like he promised.[1] It was real questionable if anyone could get a new license to open it. About then Reno put in the Red Line and the Cal-Neva was on the wrong side of the street—just outside the Line.[2] Leon knew the mayor, Len Harris, who was also the meat packer who supplied Contratto and The Stein. Leon asked Harris what the city's position would be if a local group took over the Cal-Neva. The answer was more or less that the Cal-Neva would be considered as grandfathered because it had had gaming under Zemansky—before the Red Line ordinance.

So Leon came to me with the deal. He thought that we might be able to buy Contratto's position. I talked to John Cavanaugh and he said he'd do whatever I did. So then I met with Contratto. He just wanted to be paid for his slot machines. He said, "Most of the fixtures are attached and I'm not going to fool around with pots and pans." But then we had to make our own deal with Franks.

Leon and I flew to Los Angeles to see Franks. Leon was a great businessman, but I was a better negotiator. So we decided that I should do the talking. We met with Franks in his office. He came in wearing his white dentist's suit. We told him that the Cal-Neva was closed and that there could be a problem getting it reopened. It was run down and needed work. The health department was going to be a problem. Leon had Bill Ligon primed and standing by to receive a telephone call if necessary. Franks said that Levy and Rocco were thinking of opening up the Cal-Neva themselves. We said, "Look, you're not going to get a license. The councilmen say that you're outside the Red Line and they're mad at you for closing for the winter. You won't get a license. That's why we're here to try and make a deal with you. If we can make a deal we'll take our chances with the license."

Franks asked, "Why don't you buy the building? I'll sell for $250,000." We didn't have the money, but we agreed to lease it

with an option to buy. So he said, "I want $100,000 down, $10,000 a month, and a first and last. Whoever gives me that has the property."

I said, "There's only one way we can pay that—you have to put your building up as security on our loan at the bank!" It was an unusual concept at the time.

Franks answered, "I don't care what you do as long as you pay me that $120,000." But he had to talk it over with his partners.

By the time we got back to Reno there was a telegram giving us the go-ahead. We prepared a budget and found we were going to need around $450,000 for everything. So Leon and I went to see Harvey Sewell at Nevada National Bank. He was from Ely, originally, and his family had the Sewell's Grocery stores around here. We asked Harvey for a loan to buy Franks's building. He thought it was an awful lot of money. But when we told him Franks would put up the building as collateral he changed his tune.

We decided to charge $5,000 a point for ownership. Each partner had to pay $2,000 and then lend $3,000 per point to the project. But I insisted that Leon should get a few points extra for putting it together. John Cavanaugh and I were going to have the same percentage. We needed some more partners to make it work, because we didn't have enough money. Leon ended up with 25 percent; John and I each had 20 percent. The other 35 percent went to Warren Nelson, Howard Farris and Ad Tolen. Warren and Howard had around 14 percent each. We gave Doug Busey 2 percent to do the legal work, but he sold that back to us shortly after we opened.

Warren, Howard and Ad were brought into the deal by Leon. Warren and Howard worked together at the Palace Club, and Ad was at the Golden. Actually, Ad had once worked for Zemansky at the Club Fortune dealing the wheel of fortune. They all went into business together at the South Shore of Lake Tahoe, just down the street from Harrah's. Leon was in on that deal, and so was Con Priess. Ad was running the place. But the

partners were always fighting, and so they sold out to Bill Harrah.

Anyway, when we needed partners Leon said that Warren Nelson was real good in keno. Ad Tolen was an honest guy who would be good in the cashier's cage and the pit. Howard Farris had money, and would be more of a passive investor. I was the slots guy and Leon knew about food and beverage. Except for John Cavanaugh and Howard, it was going to be a working partnership.

The Cal-Neva had been closed for maybe six months when we took over. We spent about three months remodelling it and fixing up the slot machines. It was decided that Leon and I would work daytime and Warren and Ad at night. We wanted a partner present at all times. We were each going to make fifty dollars a day. Leon was the president.

The Cal-Neva was actually a pretty small place. We wanted to make a big first impression, so we decided to have a grand opening. We bought fancy pencils, with a feather stuck on them, and prepared a mailer. We included a card with the pencil glued to it. The card said, "You've got the power of the pencil at our opening, March 31, 1962, 6:00 p.m." We sent it to every lawyer, doctor, politician, saloonkeeper—everybody. We mailed it to about a thousand people. We put a big yellow ribbon over the main entrance at Second and Center. It had swinging doors at the time. By 5:00 p.m. there was a big crowd outside blocking the street. Len Harris was there, Sheriff Bud Young, also the head of the bank. Then at 5:30 p.m. we had a fire in the basement! Some paper caught on fire and smoke began to pour out. It wasn't much of a fire; they put it out right away. But we had fire trucks adding to all the commotion.

By five to six the fire was out. We gathered our dignitaries at the main entrance for a ribbon-cutting. They were going to make speeches. We cut the ribbon and the crowd surged forward. Leon and I were engulfed, just carried along. I finally got into the pit. It was the only safe area. The place filled right up, and there were still people standing around out on the street. Our slots weren't actually open for business. According to our

license they were legal as of April 1, or when the new quarter began. So we had ribbons over the machines, like they were packaged, with a sign, "Open me at midnight." The crowd just tore them off and started playing. We weren't going to break the law, but we couldn't stop the crowd from doing it. You could say we were opened by public demand!

It seemed like everybody had a pencil with a red feather. Luckily, we had lots of cocktail waitresses. We had plenty of free hors d'oeuvres, and there was a huge line in front of the restaurant. Art Steagel was our PR man, and he kept trying to make announcements. But somebody would grab the mike from him and say, maybe, "Congratulations you guys. You have a great place!" Everybody was getting drunk. We had two champagne fountains, and you could get drunk just standing near them. It was a helluva party!

Anyway, we were doing a good business from the start. After about five or six days I asked my partners, "Are we making or losing money? Does anybody know?" Nobody did. None of the owners had an office—we wanted to be on the floor all the time. We had rented out the upstairs offices to make some extra money. Our accountant, Norman Clay, had a little office in the basement. So I went to see him to ask if we were making any money. He didn't know. I asked what our nut was—the expenses. He didn't know. He said he was swamped. So I contacted Peggy Marsh and she agreed to come to work to help Norman. She had worked for me at the Riverside. We put their desks back-to-back in that little office. Anyway, I think we made money from day one.

One of our promotions was practically in place when we bought the joint. Jimmy Contratto had a policy of giving out his menu and two free drinks to motel customers. He would have his dealers do it, and he would send someone around to the motels to distribute his menu and coupon. In those days most of Reno's guests stayed in motels; there weren't many hotel rooms. Contratto's materials were pretty plain, so we redesigned them. Leon had a lot to do with that. We had perforated tear-offs as our drink coupons. Jimmy James was our man. He was

Contratto's distributor and knew all the motel people, so he had an in. We offered a great 69¢ ham and egg breakfast special. Between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. we charged only 49¢ for it. We worked hard to have an interesting menu with the best food value in town. We wanted it to be our signature. After Jimmy James left us, Norman Clay's wife, Dorothy, took over the motel promotions and did a great job.

We became established in people's minds as a liberal slot house. When we opened I don't think we had a single dollar slot. At the Riverside we had only one dollar machine. That was because of a very wealthy lady who was there as a permanent guest and she loved to play it. It was her machine! The other customers avoided it. Maybe someone might drop one coin in, but she was the only one to buck the tiger. The first operator to push dollar machines was Si Redd. He was a good friend of Karl Berge and he talked him into putting them into the Silver Club. When we found they were getting good play we began putting in dollar slots as well.

In our second year we put in a bus program. By then the Horseshoe, Harold's and Harrah's were all bringing in buses regularly, so we thought we better get involved. I remember that it cost us about $300,000 for the bus program alone that year, and the place finished up with only about a $150,000 profit. We were paying maybe two dollars a head. So we reviewed the bus program and decided to kill it. That third year we made about the same as the second year, plus the savings from the bus program, so it didn't seem to hurt us. In fact, exposing the place to new people with the bus program had a good lasting effect. Years later some of them were still our good customers.

Another promotional idea was our payroll check cashing program. There was a lot of construction going on in Reno, and Art Steagel would send one of our real pretty cocktail waitresses to the construction sites to hand out drink tokes on payday. That brought a lot of workers into the place.

I think another reason for our success was our open-handed policy. We were very generous with free-drink tokes. If everybody had come in at the same time with the millions of tokes we

gave away it would have bankrupted the joint. But, of course, that never happened. We became famous as the place to get a free drink, whether you were a local, a tourist or a bum. Then we began to validate parking in the First National Bank garage. The first month it cost us $5,000, the next month it was $7,000, and pretty soon it was $20,000 a month. We worried a lot about that. People would come in to only validate their ticket and then walk out. Employees in the other properties used it. Then it got to be $25,000 a month. We were bothered by that number, but our bottom line was going up all the time so we were just as afraid to stop validating parking. It was bringing in more bodies all the time. It became part of our reputation as a liberal place—good food value, free drinks, free parking, loose slots.

A good example was our policy regarding cigarettes. We let Pick Southworth put in the machines. They were selling for 25¢ a pack. Everywhere else they went to 30¢, then 35¢, but we stayed at 25¢. When they were planning to raise them to 40¢, Pick came to me and said, "You guys are losing money on this." I replied, "Well, we're not going to change. If you want to keep your machines in here the price stays at 25¢." Maybe we were losing a penny or two per pack, but Pick had to put three extra machines in. On weekends sometimes he had to fill them three times a day. So it was little things like that which made a big difference.

Another Cal-Neva tradition was our birthday party every April 1. We were the only place in town that celebrated its birthday. We practically gave away the food and beverages, and we had lots of cash drawings. We gave away an automobile. It's still a popular event for the Cal-Neva after thirty-five years.

Of course, we attracted a lot of people who were right on the edge of being sleazy. We became a popular blue-collar place. A certain loyalty developed with that crowd. For them, going to the Cal-Neva was like belonging to a club. The Cal-Neva was their place. So our business grew and grew; it just gained its own momentum.

We loved being in business across the street from Bill Harrah. He had a spanking clean place and spent a lot on

advertising. He brought people to Reno and all we had to do was to get some of them to move across the street. I think we probably got 20 or 25 percent of Harrah's business. The same was true of the Sahara, which later became the Flamingo Hilton. We didn't have rooms, so we couldn't really bring people to Reno. We didn't have anyplace to put them. So we were kind of a parasite club.

Leon and I shared the same office; on a day-to-day basis we ran the general operation, cosigned checks, et cetera. As the Cal-Neva became successful enough to pay cash up front to our vendors we negotiated a lot of the contracts ourselves. If they wanted their check today they got it, but we wanted the best price, too. There was a lot of competition in town to sell things like bread. For years our bread vendor used to give me what he probably thought was a kickback for buying his bread. I would deposit it to our account, but I'm sure he believed I was enriching myself. It saved us money on bread. Sometimes we would take turns bargaining with a vendor. If Leon knew the meat salesman from his Stein days, and didn't want to squeeze him over the price, then I would do it. We usually ended up with the best possible deal. I'm sure over the years we saved the place thousands and thousands of dollars. We also scrutinized the operation all the time. We never knew exactly how many employees were stealing from us, but in the first few years we caught and terminated quite a few.

The year after we opened, the whole gaming industry in Nevada was confronted with a big challenge by the Internal Revenue Service. The feds had decided that keno was a lottery. If that were the case the game was illegal under Nevada law—although that could have been changed. The real issue was the level at which it would be taxed. The IRS was trying to make keno qualify for a higher tax rate than the other games or slots. The new ruling would have destroyed keno as we knew it.

Gaming interests in Las Vegas began to mobilize around the issue, and here in northern Nevada the Cal-Neva asked the Reno and Tahoe properties to attend a meeting. We held it at the One Sixteen Club here in Reno. It was neutral ground, not a casino

property, so we hoped everyone would feel comfortable about attending. Most of the properties sent a representative—Harold Smith himself came as their representative. Bruce Thompson was Harrah's attorney, and he attended. Warren, Leon and I were there. I talked quite a bit so when it was decided to send a delegation to Washington I was named to it by the group. We needed to raise some money for expenses, and I suggested that each property should pay five dollars into a fund for each of its slot machines. I agreed to contact everyone. I raised about $25,000. Everyone except Lincoln Fitzgerald agreed to pay.

So we were off to Washington. Warren, Bruce Thompson, Ed Olsen, head of the Nevada Gaming Control Board, and I left Reno on a flight to San Francisco one evening. That day the Giants had just defeated the Dodgers in a playoff to see who would get into the World Series, so the San Francisco airport was bedlam. Thousands of people were there to greet the team. We transferred to a red-eye flight to Washington. I remember it well because we were playing gin rummy and there was a Russian delegation on board. They kept coming over to ask us about the game in sign language. We smiled a lot but without actually communicating.

In Washington we met up with a delegation from Las Vegas. We all sat down with Nevada's two senators to plot strategy, and then we called upon the director of the IRS. As we entered the IRS building I told one of the members of the Las Vegas group, "This is the institution that can destroy the whole United States!" He agreed.

Actually, everything went quite smoothly. The government was arguing that keno was a lottery because you didn't have to be present to play or win. In Las Vegas you might be out at the pool and you could play for hours without verifying your cards. Here in Reno there was a doctor, for instance, who used to call in his numbers several times a day to Harrah's. He would go by the place maybe once a week to settle up his account. Nobody thought anything of it. So we had two or three meetings to discuss a possible compromise. Finally, it was agreed that you had to pay off the winning tickets before running the next game.

Later that got liberalized a bit, but the principle was essentially to pay winners who were present for the game within a short time after its outcome.

So basically we won and it was time to go home. Well, I mentioned in passing to my new friend from Las Vegas that as Giants fans we northern Nevadans sure would have liked to have seen the World Series. By then San Francisco was playing the Yankees. He was a real sweet Jewish fellow who spoke with an accent. He managed to get us rooms at the Plaza Hotel and four World Series tickets.

Bruce, Warren, Ed and I took the train to New York. When we got to the Plaza Hotel we had two adjoining suites and they cost $150 each! I asked, "For the week?"

"No, Mr. Douglass: per night." Well, we had a lot of money left in the expense fund, so this was our "victory banquet." We were going to see a couple of World Series games and have a little fun in New York.

At that time the big show in New York was *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* with Zero Mostel. That was a tough ticket, too, but our hotel got us some. So before the show we went out to dinner to a fancy South American restaurant. They had Pisco Punch on their drink menu, and I told everyone how wonderful it was. I knew about it from my trip to Peru with the Cavanaughs. So we started drinking Pisco Punches and, man, they were good. We went to the theater and all four of us fell sound asleep in our seats. No one saw the show!

The Giants won the next day and that night we were scheduled to go out to dinner again. But Ed Olsen was too worn out. Ed had polio as a child and he had to drag his lower body around. So he and Warren decided to stay at the hotel. After dinner Bruce and I went to some little night club that was the "in" place in New York. The Twist was the national dance-craze, and it had started there. So the place was very popular and there was a long line. I went up to the security guy and said, "We're from out of town and we only have a few hours. I would like to give you my card." I handed him a rolled-up twenty dollar bill.

He told us to stand to one side, and pretty soon we were in the door.

We watched the action for maybe an hour and then started walking back to our hotel. We came to another long line that went right round a whole block. People were waiting to get into the movie *Divorce Italian Style*. Bruce said he'd heard about it and that he doubted it would come to Reno but he would sure like to see it. So I told him to stick with me. We went to the head of the line and there was no way. But then I noticed that every so often a side door, an exit, would open and someone would leave. So I went over and stood by it. The next time it opened Bruce and I walked right in. That wasn't too long before he became a judge!

Anyway, we won our argument with the IRS and when we got back to Reno I returned what was left of our expense fund to the contributors. Everyone was very happy. Then I got a call from Lincoln Fitzgerald congratulating us and offering to put in his share. I basically said, "Screw you. You weren't there when we needed you and we don't need you now."

A big part of my job was to make business deals for the Cal-Neva. As we became more successful we needed more space. We were just a small joint at first, from the alley to the southwest corner of Second and Center. To the south on our same half block there was Western Union, a little hole-in-the-wall storefront, and the Gazette building. The Gazette building eventually became part of today's FIB garage. Harry Frost had the Western Union and that little storefront place.

About three years after opening we considered expanding. I believe that Warren was the one who kept insisting that we needed the Western Union building. He was the moving light and he was right. He was good friends with Harry Frost. Harry had Reno Print across the street, and we were buying our keno paper from him—maybe $5,000 orders at a time. I met with Harry at the Golden Coffee Shop to discuss the deal. He wanted to sell, and Warren sure wanted us to buy. I think we agreed on $250,000 for the two buildings.

Our biggest problem was getting the money. We needed about another $200,000 to demolish the structures and construct what we needed, and we still hadn't exercised our option with Dr. Franks for our original building. So while we had great business, we were taking on a lot of debt as well. I went to see Harvey Sewell and he loaned us the money.

About that time the Sawyer administration in Carson City decided to organize a "Sell Nevada" tour to Europe. They wanted to send some businessmen and politicians to several European cities—London, Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin, Milan—to try to attract investment for the state. Leon and I received an invitation, but for some reason he couldn't go. Bob Ring from Harrah's went along. Eddie Ginsburg, my army friend and owner of Home Furniture, joined the group. Bernie Einstoss was along, but only as far as New York, because he got sick and dropped out. There were maybe ten or twelve of us from northern Nevada and about twenty from Vegas.

The idea was for each of us to pay his own way. They had a special airfare rate, so it was a bargain. The state paid for an advance man to spend six months over there before our trip. He had a big budget for those days, maybe $175,000, just to entertain local dignitaries and the media. The governor led the group. The plan was for him to get up and say a few words and then call on one of us to make a particular spiel. We northerners might talk about Lake Tahoe and the natural beauties of our area; the Las Vegas people were to discuss their growth and opportunity. We were also going to explain Nevada's favorable tax structure. We showed slides—basically it was a Chamber of Commerce type of deal.

The trip was right after the election. We left a few days later and the U.S. senate race between Cannon and Laxalt was still undecided. It was very, very close—just a few votes difference. Sawyer was getting all kinds of calls, since it looked like there might be a recount or another election. He told me, "I want to keep my nose out of it. I'm on a trip now and I don't want to get my messages. I don't want to be in the middle of that fight." So

he did all he could to just stay out of Nevada politics while we were on the road.

On that trip I became pretty close to some of the Las Vegas people—Parry Thomas, Sam Boyd, Jackie Gaughan. Sam had dealt craps at the Club Fortune before it became the Club Cal-Neva. He said he dealt to Howard Hughes. Every time Hughes came in it was with a different girl friend. He liked roulette. Sam was also a great friend in Las Vegas of the clothier and city councilman Dick Ronzoni. Well, the Ronzonis started out in Tonopah. I went to school with Esther Ronzoni, and Dick was a few years behind us. So Sam and I had mutual friends that we could talk about.

Anyway, Sam, Jackie and I got to be pretty close on that trip. One night we were having dinner and they told me about the shortage of nickels in Las Vegas. They couldn't get enough. I knew we had lots of nickels in our vault at the Club Cal-Neva. They offered to pay me a premium for some of them. They wanted to send a truck to Reno for them. So when I got home I talked to my partners and we agreed to sell Boyd and Gaughan some nickels. I think we sold about $250,000 worth and made around $3,000 on the deal. Sam and Jackie were just delighted because for awhile they had more nickels than anybody else in Las Vegas! As it turned out that trip proved to be more important to the Club Cal-Neva than just an opportunity to make a little profit selling some nickels.

Then, in the mid-1960s, we became interested in the Cal-Neva Lodge at Lake Tahoe. Frank Sinatra used to perform there. He liked the area so he decided to buy the Lodge. He expanded its showroom to maybe 500 seats so he could perform in it for his friends and guests. He put a helipad over the new construction so he could come and go easily. Leon and I had attended Frank's opening; I remember that Herb Caen was at our table. After the show we went backstage. By then we had a giveaway item for the Club Cal-Neva in Reno. It was a money clip with a penny on it. It had an inscription which said "After taxes, Club Cal-Neva, Reno." I gave one to Sinatra and to Dean Martin. I said, "With this in your pocket you can never go

completely broke!" They thought it was a great idea, but they had never heard of the Club Cal-Neva in Reno.

It was about two years later that the McGuire Sisters were playing Cal-Neva Lodge. Phyllis McGuire was Sam Giancana's girl friend. Just a few years earlier the Nevada Gaming authorities had started their Black Book of people who were not to be allowed in Nevada casinos. You had to be a pretty bad character to get in there. Giancana was a mobster from Chicago and he was listed. So the McGuire Sisters were playing at the Lodge, and here was Giancana staying in one of those cottages with Phyllis.

Someone reported Giancana's presence to Ed Olsen, the head of Nevada's Gaming Control Board. So Ed called Sinatra and told him that Giancana was a *persona non grata* in Nevada. Sinatra told Olsen to go to hell; he would run his place anyway he wanted to. Ed was furious. He wrote a letter that Cal-Neva Lodge was in violation of Nevada law. He ordered Sinatra to come to Carson. The version that I heard is that they really got into a shouting match and Sinatra called Olsen a "crippled son of a bitch." Olsen knew Sinatra was a big man, of course, so he went to the governor. The governor told Ed to yank Sinatra's license, which he did. So Sinatra became *persona non grata* in Nevada; he was told to stay out of gaming houses, even in Las Vegas.

That was it for Frank Sinatra at the Cal-Neva Lodge. The place was closed for seven or eight months before it was opened by Art Wood. Art was working for Boise Cascade when they were building their Incline Village project. He thought they could make a go of the Cal-Neva Lodge, and he opened it at the beginning of the summer. I think they lost their shirts, because they shut the doors that same fall. Then the son of an Italian guy in Vegas had it for about three months, and the state closed him down for cheating. So the Cal-Neva just sat there empty for another year or so.

Leon had a house at Lake Tahoe; he spent a lot of time up there. One day he said to me that he thought we ought to look into the Cal-Neva Lodge. He liked the idea of a connection with

our place in Reno—we had the same name. Bill Kennett[3] was at the Lake with his father-in-law, Joseph Greenbach, who had built the Biltmore near the Cal-Neva Lodge. We went to visit Bill, and Mr. Greenbach was there. We started discussing the possibility of buying the Lodge. So we all drove over there, found the caretaker and took a walk through it. Greenbach said, "It's going to take a lot of work and money to fix it up. The biggest weakness is that it doesn't have rooms." He said personally he wasn't interested in investing.

By then Art Wood had moved to Reno and become an accountant with the firm of Chanslor and Folsom. My accountant was Roy Chanslor, but his eyes were giving out so he turned me over to Art. When he heard we might be interested, Art said, "Well, Frank Sinatra never did anything without the advice of his attorney, Mickey Rudin." Rudin lived in L.A. or Hollywood. We contacted him and he invited us to come down to discuss the matter. Leon and I were waiting in his reception area when Lucille Ball walked out of his office. She was crying. We went in and he said, "She's such a sweet lady, but she doesn't know how to handle her money. I have to cover for her all the time. She comes here and cries, cries, cries and I give her a little money and she goes away happy. At least until next time when she comes back and cries some more!" He had lots of movie-star clients.

Rudin said, "I want Frank out of Nevada right now. That place is just hanging round his neck. If you can propose a deal where he can make a few bucks, you can have it." We didn't know what Sinatra had invested, so we had no idea what the right offer might be. I started talking, "Well, we can't take the Cal-Neva Lodge in its present condition. It won't make it in today's world without a hotel."

"I have always believed that, too. I thought that when Frank built the showroom he should have considered rooms. But there's not much land and it's steep. The good part has those cottages. Besides, anyone who wants to build a hotel is going to have lots of problems with the people at Lake Tahoe. They don't want anyone to build."

We never could reach agreement on a price in that meeting; I'm not sure we even discussed one. What we did find out was that Sinatra owed about $800,000 on Cal-Neva Lodge at First National Bank, and they were pressing him. It seems he was speculating in foreign currency at the time, the German mark, and it hadn't gone as well as hoped. He had several obligations coming due and was short of cash.

We went to see Art Smith, president of First National Bank here in Reno. We showed him the numbers at our place and an estimate from Ev Brunzell on what it would take to build 200 rooms. I think we asked for $10,000,000 altogether. Smith said they couldn't make the loan. He suggested we buy the place and run it for a year. If everything went well, then he and some other banks might lend us the money for a hotel. I said, "No, we won't touch it without rooms. If we open without a hotel we are going to go right down the tube! Two operators have failed there since Sinatra!" But Art Smith wouldn't budge.

Well, then I remembered Parry Thomas from the Sell Nevada tour to Europe. Parry was the head of Valley Bank in Las Vegas—the big lender to the gaming industry there. So when Art Smith turned us down I said to Leon, "I know the head of Valley Bank." So I called Parry and he said to come down. He picked us up at the airport in his black, brand new Mercedes 600. He was really proud of that car. We explained the deal and he said, "You know, I spent my honeymoon at the Cal-Neva Lodge. I'll never forget that place. I was in one of those cottages. I got up the first morning, saw that beautiful lake, ran down and jumped in—I nearly froze to death."

After dinner Parry drove us to the Riviera where we were staying. As we got out of the car he said, "I know the Cal-Neva Lodge area pretty well. Maybe we can make a deal. It depends on how much money you need. I want you to work with Bob Sullivan at our bank in Reno. If the numbers come out right, and Bob likes the deal, we'll go from there."

Well, that was encouraging. So we got ahold of Lud Corrao, Ev Brunzell's son-in-law, to do cost estimates for the construction. It was going to be more than six million. I finally got a

number out of Mickey Rudin which wasn't too bad. I think it was about four million, and then we knocked it down to about $3.5 million. Then we needed money for the FF&E (furnishings, fixtures and equipment). The slot machines were going to be a big number, and in those days there was no IGT to lease them from. Altogether, it was going to cost something like $12.5 million and we could only come up with about two. So we were $10.5 million short.

We worked with Sullivan and then made several trips to see Parry. Sullivan's brother, Ken, was a big player at Valley Bank-Las Vegas, and we worked with him on the numbers, too. I also asked Home Savings to lend us one million dollars. I thought it would be a good loan for them. Of course, I would have to resign from the board in order for them to make it. They finally agreed to $500,000 and I was out of Home Savings until we paid that back. Then the number came in from Valley Bank at $7.5 million. It wasn't enough. So I went to Las Vegas with Bob to see Parry. We talked all day, and then I played gin rummy all night with Bob and Ken at the Riviera. We played cards and drank booze until 7:00 a.m., which is when they took me to my plane.

Anyway, we were still short. I negotiated back and forth with Parry on the telephone and finally got him to $8.25 million. We were still about a million light. I knew Cal Kinney and Bill Stremmel had the Pyramid Leasing Company here in Reno. Well, we were able to make a deal with them to lease all the furnishings—the whole ball of wax, including carpet, wallpaper, everything. I think we were going to pay $175,000 down and then so much a month to Pyramid. So we had our financing.

Before we could build we had to get our approvals, and it wasn't going to be easy. We were proposing tearing down those cottages to build a high-rise hotel. We had a hell of a time. We had many meetings with the county commissioners and the League to Save Lake Tahoe. It all came down to one important meeting at the Washoe County courthouse. Mickey Rudin flew in for it in Sinatra's jet. David Jacobsen was our architect. He's a polished speaker, and he showed how our project would fit in well with the environment. We had expert witnesses testifying

that we wouldn't hurt Lake Tahoe. Bill Raggio was the district attorney and our friend. He was helping to push the decision our way. Lots of people came out of the woodwork to make speeches. The Hill family of Hills Brothers Coffee had a place below us on the lake, and they were opposed. It all came down to one tree. We had to cut it down to build the tower, and it became kind of a symbol. Anyway, when it came to a vote we won.

So Lud Corrao took charge of the construction. We built the tower during the winter, one of the heaviest ever. Every day it seemed like the crews had to clear snow off the project before they could work. Lud was quite young, but a great go-getter. He's become a major builder for the gaming industry and a principal in the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas. I took a personal interest in the interior. I got to know a furniture manufacturer in San Francisco and worked with him on everything. It always irritates me when I stay in a hotel and it doesn't have a convenient reading light, so we designed lights into the headboards.

When we were about to have our grand opening Mickey said, "I suppose you want Frank to perform at your opening; it's going to cost you a lot."

"Oh no, he can come as our guest, but we don't want him on stage." We opened with a stage show instead, some kind of South American review.

Well, the first summer we had good business up there, but then came the wintertime. We thought the skiers would be good and we were wrong. We offered them free hors d'oeuvres—cheese dip and wine. Well, they would fill up on that and, if they stayed with us, they packed in maybe seven to a room. We found out the hard way about young skiers. We were also having management problems. None of us wanted to live at Tahoe, so we were commuting a lot from Reno. We were getting tired of it. About February, we got a nibble on the property from the Ohio Real Estate Investment Group, and we started negotiating. We sold the Cal-Neva Lodge to them in the fall of 1970. Altogether, we were only up there at Tahoe for about a year and a half. We made three million on the sale.

But that wasn't quite the end of the story. The buyers were supposed to assume everything, including our lease with Pyramid Leasing Company. We left some of our key people at Cal-Neva Lodge to help them out. The buyers weren't very experienced, but they didn't like to take advice either. We warned them against hiring expensive entertainment, but they didn't listen. It only took them a few months to go broke.

So now the Cal-Neva Lodge was closed and I got a call from the attorney Frank Peterson. Stremmel had sold his lease to another company. Frank was representing it, and maybe the bank that had the paper on the property. He said, "You owe $350,000 on all that furniture at Cal-Neva Lodge!" I looked at our contract, and it looked like we might be vulnerable now that our buyers had gone broke. So I called Peterson and said, "Frank, before we pay you that $350,000 we're going to Tahoe to strip the place. We will remove the carpets, wallpaper, lighting fixtures, and furniture, because we leased *everything.*" If we did that it was going to be awfully hard to sell the place. Frank said he'd get back to me about it. I'm still waiting.

As a part of the sale I also had to clean up a problem that we had with Nate Jacobson. Nate had an interest in Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. The rumor was that he had problems with his partners and they bought him out for $19 million in cash, which was a huge sum of money in those days. So he either built or bought the hotel at Incline which is the Hyatt today.

When we went to Tahoe we heard that Jacobson was a big gambler—and also that he was a difficult son of a bitch to get along with. Well, we weren't open a week and here comes Nate Jacobson wanting to gamble. He asked for a $10,000 marker and lost it right away at craps. So he wanted ten more. He lost that, too, and then he went across the street and lost $100,000. A week later he came back and asked for more credit. He still owed us $20,000 and now he wanted $30,000 more. We decided to make that his limit. He was terrible to our employees, really foul-mouthed. One cocktail waitress dumped a tray of drinks on him after he poured one down her dress and said something to her. She came to us crying, saying that she knew we would fire

her because Jacobson was such a good customer. We told her to get her tray and to go back to her job.

Anyway, Nate took that $30,000 in cash, beat us, and walked out with the money without paying off his marker. Maybe he went somewhere else and lost it. The whole time we're up there Jacobson would come and go. Sometimes he beat us and sometimes we beat him. By the time we sold out he still owed us $125,000. He wouldn't return our calls, and he had the reputation of being a real tough guy when it came to money. When our deal with the Ohio group was about to close I went to his hotel and asked to see him. His secretary said, "Mr. Jacobson is busy."

I said, "I'm Jack Douglass from Cal-Neva Lodge; he knows who I am and I want to talk to him."

I sat there a long time and then asked if Jacobson knew I was there. She said yes, but that he had left to go to a meeting. She said he had another exit from his office and he was gone. So I told her I would be back next day at noon. "You tell him I want to see him personally!"

Next day I went there and she said, "Mr. Jacobson is tied up right now. He knows you're here."

"Well, is he going out the back door?"

"No, he intends to see you Mr. Douglass."

After about fifteen minutes I was ready to tear his door down, but then he came out. We went into his office and he said, "I suppose you want your money."

"Yes."

"Well, I'm short. I can't pay now. We can work something out. I'll give it to you ten thousand at a time whenever I can."

I said, "Go downstairs and take it off the tables. You've been screwing us around for a long time. Then you sneak out the back door yesterday. I want that money now!"

Well, he said he couldn't take the money off his tables. We went back and forth. Finally I told him we would take $75,000 by the next day, and the other fifty before we left the Lake. I said that if we didn't get it I was going to the Nevada Gaming Commission. Frank Peterson was his attorney, too. I told him I was advising Frank that we would bring charges against him,

and that he was going to make the headlines in the newspaper if we didn't get our money.

He said he couldn't have $75,000 by the next day. I said I'd be back. I went there the next day and he gave me maybe $10,000. "That's all I can come up with." So I told him I was sending someone over every day. That's how we got our money. One day it might be $10,000, the next five. Anyway, we got every dime over the last month that we were in business up there. Shortly thereafter Jacobson went broke, lost everything. He just gambled away what he got out of Caesar's. If we hadn't been so anxious to clean up his account because of our sale, I imagine we would have been burned for at least a hundred thousand. I don't know what ever happened to Nate Jacobson.

Our Reno business at the Club Club Cal-Neva just kept getting better, and pretty soon we knew we had to expand again. By then First National Bank, or maybe by then it was First Interstate, had built its garage and tower, so we were blocked in that direction. The garage had become important to our business because of all our validations. The only option was to cross the alley to the west. It wasn't going to be easy; there were many property owners to deal with.

The first building west of the alley on Second was a pawn and jewelry shop. There was a European or Middle Eastern tenant in there. I can't remember his nationality. Its ownership was part of a trust at FIB. Its lease had just about run out, and Dick Kwapil of First National Bank's Trust Department was entertaining bids. It was to be a five year lease with a five year option. If we could get it we would control the property for at least ten years, and I thought that later we would be able to convince the bank to either extend the lease or sell us the property. Leon and I discussed our bid. I thought maybe we should be unorthodox and bid "one thousand dollars a month more than the highest bid." Leon didn't like the idea. He thought it might be disallowed. So we went with a straight number; I think we offered $45,000 a year.

There were three bids, and both of the others were higher than ours. One was pretty phony. The bidder didn't seem to have

a use for the property; it looked like a nuisance bid designed to make us deal with him. Bill Thornton, John Cavanaugh's son-in-law, was our attorney, and he demanded that the bidder show the wherewithal to perform. When push came to shove he couldn't—he just stated that he would try to get the money from his wife. So the bank was embarrassed for accepting that bid.

Our bigger problem was the tenant. We thought he was ready to retire and wouldn't bid at all; we didn't want to leave money on the table by bidding too high. Well, the tenant outbid us, so we had to deal with him. We had to find him a place to move on Virginia Street and pay him something like $15,000 or $20,000. But, anyway, we got control of the property. From there to the corner there were three store fronts, with a sixteen room hotel upstairs. All of that property was owned by Katie Dodd, who lived in the Bay Area. She owned half of the Hale's drugstore property at the corner of Virginia and Second as well. The other half was owned by William Coblentz, her nephew or some kind of relative, who was a prominent San Francisco attorney. John Hickock was a tenant in one of Katie's properties. It was John who brought Katie and I together.

So I began to negotiate with her and we became fast friends. She didn't want to sell, but was real amenable to leasing. We signed ten year leases on very favorable terms. She had more real estate on Virginia Street—where Hilp's drugstore was, and the Wonder shop and Lerner's. She wanted us to lease them all so she wouldn't have to worry about it. We did just to keep her happy.

Going south on Virginia, we needed Armanko's stationery store and the Waldorf. Mrs. Armanko was widowed and was my neighbor. I approached her, but she didn't want to sell. Her attorney was Dick Blakely, and she told me to discuss it with him. I never could get her to sell, but they agreed to lease us the place.

Then there was the Waldorf. It was owned by Rita Benetti, Louie's widow. By then Joe had been killed in an automobile accident. Rita was not too interested in selling. I called her and her daughter Maria a few times. I wasn't really getting any-

where, so I invited them to lunch. By then I owned a Rolls Royce that had once been a London taxicab. So I drove up in front of their house in that great big car. Rita was so impressed she was almost afraid to get in it. We went to lunch and I said, "We've gotta have your building." Maria thought they should sell. Anyway, as a result of that lunch we got the Waldorf for I think $90,000. That was a lot of money at the time.

So now we had the area that we needed to double the size of the Club Cal-Neva and take it all the way to the corner of Virginia and Second. By then we owned everything on our block except the FIB building and garage, and the property between the bank and us on Virginia. It belonged to Karadanis and Maloff. Warren wanted us to buy it in the worst way. We had several negotiations, but the price was always too high. They even proposed getting a percentage of the Club Cal-Neva for their property. We were never able to make that deal, so Karadanis and Maloff built the Virginian there. Later on we bought the FIB property, so today the Club Cal-Neva owns the whole block, excluding the Virginian.

Chapter Eight

Other Spiels and Other Deals

I was at the Club Cal-Neva for more than twenty-five years and was involved in lots of other deals. Some of them were just on my own; some were with my Club Cal-Neva partners.

I still had to take care of my building on Commercial Row. At first it was a hands-on proposition. I had to keep it rented. While I was still in Nevada Novelty I had real trouble with the Montana. I couldn't keep tenants in there. Sometimes it turned over a couple of times a year, and then we had to change all the licenses on the business and the machines. Right after I bought the place I hadn't received my rent for a while, so I sent Roy Donatelli over there to tell the tenant to come see me. So this guy shows up. I was sitting behind my desk. He claimed he had a right to assign his lease if the Kid sold; he said he was supposed to get some money for his interest. I told him the place was now mine and he said, "I don't have to do business with you. If you want your rent, well send me a bill."

He didn't plan to pay it, so I went around the desk and grabbed him. I said, "Look, you son of a bitch, if you're not out of there by tonight I'm sending down the law. Get out of here!"

After he left, Roy said, "Do you know who that was?"

"No."

"He's one of those guys from San Francisco—the mob."

"What mob?"

"Oh, there's a bunch of them hanging around the Montana Cafe. They knocked over something in San Francisco and then came up here. The Montana is a den of thieves."

"Well, they better be out by tonight."

So about two hours later this guy from the Montana comes in, maybe the bartender. "I want to apologize for Harry. He didn't mean what he said."

I said, "Whoever he is, I want him out of there right now. If I can't throw him out myself the law will do it. He comes in here and threatens me; nobody's going to threaten me." I was scared to death, but my voice didn't crack. Anyway, they cleared out.

Then when I was in the Club Cal-Neva I had a similar problem. One of the bars in my building was called the Twenty-Two Club. I wasn't getting my rent, so I sent for the tenant. He came in and said, "You're Mr. Douglass? Well, I planned to meet with you. We're just getting started and we're a little short. But here's some rent money." He was in there six or seven months and it turned out he was one of the biggest crooks that ever came to Reno. His name was Jimmy Eng. He had a gang and they knocked off three or four bars in Sun Valley. Then they pulled a big art heist at the May Ranch. Eng was a real gangster; he made the police nervous.

Bill Magee, the head of our security at the Club Cal-Neva, infiltrated the gang. He was driving Eng back and forth to Las Vegas. He set Eng up for the Reno Police. He was to take him to a motel on East Fourth for a meeting to try and sell some of those stolen paintings. The police were hiding out there. McGee had some sort of prearranged signal if the loot was in the car. McGee walked away and gave the signal. There was a shootout and Eng was killed right there. He never made it out of the car.

Anyway, I had my building and it was giving me some headaches. Harold Smith, Sr. had leased the place at the corner of Virginia and Commercial Row, across Douglas Alley from the original Harold's Club. He put in a little place with gambling called something like "Harold's Bar." The next place to the east was the Wine House, owned by the Francovich family. Then

came my building. East of me there was another place that I tried to get but never could. Then came the Palace Club on the corner of Commercial and Center Streets.

Harold was thinking of expanding Harold's Club. He thought maybe he could build a hotel tower on Commercial Row, so he wanted to lease all that property. I'm not sure about the Palace Club, but he leased all the rest of it at that time—1976. I went with him to see his attorney and signed a lease for forty-five years.

In some ways it was a pretty good one—triple net. That meant he paid the taxes, insurance and any city assessments. All I had to do was to collect the rent. Then your mother and I started gifting portions of the property to you kids until we only had a minority interest. But what that lease didn't have was a COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment). Inflation started taking off and our fixed rent was worth less and less.

Meanwhile, Howard Hughes's Summa Corporation started buying up Nevada properties. They picked up six in Las Vegas and Harold's Club in Reno. I think Harold's Club was their best return on investment. Phil Griffith was their manager here in Reno. They were doing so well that they decided to expand Harold's to Commercial Row in 1986. According to our lease with Harold Smith, which they had assumed when they bought Harold's Club, all they had to do was notice us. They were going to demolish our building for the new construction just like Harold Smith would have had he built his tower. Well, now we were going to lose the building and we were stuck with a really low rent. So I read through the lease and two clauses caught my eye. One was that we had the right to approve their construction plans, and we hadn't seen them. The other was that before the building could be altered the lessee had to satisfy the lessor that he had the financial wherewithal to meet his future financial obligations. I wrote to Summa saying that before they demolished our building I wanted to see their plans, the operating statement on Harold's Club, and Summa's financial statement.

Phil Griffith came to see me. He said, "I know more or less what you make here at the Club Cal-Neva, and you know about

what we do; you don't need our operating statement." Obviously, he didn't want one of his competitors to see his numbers. That was one of the things I was counting on. Then he said, "You know Mr. Hughes is solid." What I knew was that Mr. Hughes was the most secretive man in the world, and there was no way I was getting his financial statement. He said, "If we go to court I think we'll win."

"Well, that's what judges and juries are for."

The timetable for the new construction was in place and Phil didn't want any delays. So he said, "What do you want?" We got a pretty good increase in our rent and a COLA clause as well.

Later, when Phil formed the Fitzgerald group and then bought Harold's Club, he wanted to assume the lease and get Summa off the hook. I refused to go for that. My first lease was with the Smith family and they went broke. The Fitzgerald group was new and had a lot of debt. I thought they might go broke, too. So I refused to assign the lease. I think Fitzgerald's had to indemnify Summa in some way. Now Fitzgerald's has sold Harold's to the new outfit that plans to remodel the property. They wanted off that lease, but I refused. As far as I'm concerned our tenant today is Summa Corporation.

Home Savings was another of my personal business interests during my Club Cal-Neva years, and I sold it twice! The first time was after we moved from Roff Way and First Street into our new building. We built a nice headquarters at the corner of California and Virginia. John Hickock was president and I was secretary-treasurer. Our manager, Ray, had left by then because he had a chance to start up a savings and loan at Tahoe. I was devoting less time because of my involvement with the Club Cal-Neva.

We had started with $500,000 and had grown to maybe fifty million. John Hickock was wheeling and dealing all the time, and he was entertaining offers for the business. There was a negotiation with some doctor. He was out of Salt Lake but a native of Sweden. He was a big businessman in South America and was buying up savings and loans. But nothing came of it.

Then John and I met with Charley Horsey, president of Nevada Savings and Loan in Las Vegas. They were bigger than Home Savings and were interested in acquiring us.

We asked Charley what we were worth and he said, "Hell, I don't know." We explored basing the sale on earnings, but even if we priced our stock at ten times earnings we weren't going to get very much because we hadn't been in business long enough. What we were selling was our potential. I think we eventually settled on a price of three to one for every dollar we had originally invested.

We had only been in business for three or four years and here was a chance to triple our money. But I wasn't sure about selling out myself. So we had a stockholders' meeting and announced that anyone who wanted out at a nice profit had the opportunity. The farmer from California decided to sell. He said, "Beats working for a living." John Hickock and the majority of shareholders decided to sell too.

I was playing golf at Hidden Valley one day, and John drove out with Horsey. Charley said, "I understand you don't want to sell out. Why don't you stay in with us?"

"Well, I might want to sell some stock."

"Sell whatever you want, but we would like you to stay on board. You're well known in the community and we need some local representation up here. I want you to be an officer and to stay on our board."

I agreed to think it over. A few days later he called me back and said that he was totally convinced that I should stay in the company. He offered to buy whatever stock I wanted to sell; he thought it was going to go up in value. Then he said, "If you'll stay, every two years we'll buy you a new car, whatever model you want. We'll pay for your gas." So that won me over. I may have sold some stock, but not very much.

Charley Horsey sent his son Chas to Reno to be the manager and board member. Charley was president. We had several local people on the board—Clark Guild, Jr., Al Solari, Lee Besso, Ben Dasher. Other than the Horseys there were no outsiders. The

business continued to grow over the next few years until we had several branches in northern Nevada.

Charley was on the Sell Nevada trip, and we sat together on the flight home from Rome. By then he had moved to Reno and bought a big house. He said, "I want to sell Home Savings; I've worked as long as I care to. Can you put a group together to buy me out?" I think he had 52 percent of the stock.

I said, "I'm not going to work on it unless you give me a written commitment for a certain period of time to sell your stock at a set price." So he gave me an option; I didn't have to pay anything for it.

I got ahold of Ben Dasher, Al Solari and Bob Banks. Bob was the manager of Home Savings at that time. I told them about the option and suggested that we try to put together a group. I told them I didn't expect any consideration for my option. Whoever put a dollar in would get a dollar out. They thought that was very fair. I offered to do the footwork. I had the names of two savings and loans in San Francisco. They weren't the biggest ones, but they weren't small either. I went to see the heads of both of them. I told them we would stay on in a minority position or, if they preferred, we would step aside. We offered to sell all the stock or just Charley's part. If they bought it all they got one price, and if they only bought out Charley it was another. Either way we were going to make a profit.

While those negotiations were going on Bob Banks put me in touch with Maurice Shenker of the Dunes Hotel. Shenker had been the lawyer for Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters. When he came to Nevada he had trouble getting licensed, but he squeaked through. He was building a big project with a golf course in California just outside of Sacramento. He also had an option on some land in Gardnerville for another. He wanted to buy a savings and loan to lend money to his own projects. Later that got to be a big problem with the collapse of Lincoln Savings and Loan, but in those days it was legal.

Shenker asked to see us, so we flew to Las Vegas. We hadn't had time to discuss among ourselves what we would propose. We were eating lunch in the restaurant of the Dunes and I wrote

down the structure of a deal on my napkin. We went upstairs to the executive offices and he was very pleasant: "I'm so glad you've come to talk to me. I know you have a very successful operation in Reno. I think Reno is a very nice little town. I like Nevada, blah, blah."

He said he and his associates were looking to buy a savings and loan and they were interested in ours. So I said, "Well, Mr. Shenker, here's our proposition," and I handed him the napkin. He thought it was a wonderful idea to write out a proposal on a napkin.

He agreed to the napkin deal and never stopped talking about it. I went to Vegas several times to negotiate details and I always stayed at the Dunes as his guest. He would introduce me by saying, "Here's my friend Jack Douglass. We do business on a napkin. Ha, ha!" His wife thought that was hysterical. Your mother went with me on one of the trips, and Maurice told us Jimmy Hoffa stories. He complained about his problems with Hoffa.

Shenker bought quite a bit of stock in Home Savings and he had an option on more. But he didn't have control. Then his son opened a casino in downtown Las Vegas and Maurice got Bob Banks to make him a loan. It was a dog of a loan. We never did lend him money on his Sacramento project, but we gave him some kind of loan in Gardnerville.

Home Savings was doing all right. I was on the board and an officer. In about 1982 we were approached by U.S. Leasing. They kept sending their people up to negotiate. I didn't like their president much, but the others were charming. We negotiated for about seven or eight weeks. The sticking point was that they didn't want to buy all the stock, just a controlling interest. They wanted to buy just some large blocks. I thought that all the shareholders should have an equal chance to sell. By then John Cavanaugh was dead, and his brother, Charlie, had just died. His wife and daughter wanted to sell their stock in Home Savings, but it wasn't included in the U.S. Leasing proposal. I didn't think that was right.

Anyway, by then Home Savings had about $250,000,000 in deposits and they finally agreed to buy the whole thing for $15,000,000. I got $1.5 million, so I owned 10 percent of the company. I think we sold at just about the right time. It was a couple of years later that they deregulated savings and loans, and that's when a lot of trouble started. We were really just babes in the woods, but the federal regulations provided clear guidelines. All we had to do was follow them. After deregulation a lot of savings and loans were mismanaged and the whole country got stuck with the bill.

A good example of a Club Cal-Neva group initiative was Amber Corporation. Maybe five or six years after we opened, Jim Teipner of T & T Engineering here in Reno came to me. He liked to play craps at the Club Cal-Neva; it was his favorite place. He liked our food and prices. He and Mrs. Teipner would come in almost every Friday night to eat. She'd play the machines while he was at the craps table.

They had a friend from Lincoln City, Oregon, named Ted, and he would come in with the Teipners. He had an oil distributorship in Lincoln City. So the Teipners brought him to see me and he said that a good piece of land was available on the Oregon Coast. It was owned by an Indian family. The parents were killed in an automobile accident and the court was determining what to do with the land for the children. The judge wanted to sell it to set up a trust for them.

So I agreed to go up for a look there with John Cavanaugh and Pete Marich. John was a good land man; he was good at values. Pete was in my gin-rummy group and was the pro at the Washoe County golf course. We wanted him along because there was a nine hole course next to the land, and we thought that it might be incorporated if we started a project. We went to Portland, rented a car and started out for Lincoln City—maybe eighty miles away. It was dark and raining like hell. I'll never forget it because we got lost. We ended up at a farmhouse and Cavanaugh knocked on the door. Pete and I stayed in the car. John came back and said, "The guy thinks if we go back three miles and turn left we should get to Lincoln City. He says he's

been there once. I asked him how long he's lived here, and he said 'All my life.'" We got to Lincoln City, which was about twelve miles, and I'm thinking of the farmer who'd lived there all his life and been there once.

We looked at the land and it was beautiful. It had about a thousand feet of ocean front and then went back all the way to Highway 101. We played the golf course. After we got back to Reno Cavanaugh told the Club Cal-Neva board that we should buy that land. The Teipners were going to have 25 percent, the oil distributor would have 25 percent, and we would buy 50 percent. I think the price was $1.2 million. I went to the banker at the Nevada National Bank and asked to borrow $600,000. He said he couldn't take undeveloped land as security, but he would lend us the money on our personal signatures. The other partners all went up to Oregon to look at the property and we decided to buy it. We bought it as Amber Corporation—not as individuals—but we had to give personal signatures at the bank.

So now we had to develop the property. It had no services other than sewer; Lincoln City had a sewer plant on it and paid us a little rent. We were going to have to face zoning issues and develop services. We went to Portland and had some discussions with one group, two brothers, who turned out later to be one of the biggest hotel developers on the west coast. They started the Red Lion Inns. At that time they only had a few properties, and they weren't ready to go into Lincoln City quite yet. Anyway, finally we met Jim Hemstreet, who was a developer, and Bill Brenner, who was a builder. I sort of knew Hemstreet from before. At one time I think he ran the Midway Motel for Louie Benetti in Reno.

We were going to be partners with Hemstreet, fifty-fifty. He was going to lease the motel back and run it. Brenner was our builder. We constructed the Dunes Motel, maybe 200 units. Then we decided to build a shopping center along the highway—the Miracle Village Shopping Center. I didn't really have much to do with that. I think Ted and Brenner worked it out. Hemstreet wasn't a part of that. Our main tenant was Safeway—it was the anchor. Then there were some smaller stores. I remember that

Safeway had a real cheap lease. They were going to pay a certain percentage of sales, and then only after they reached a certain level. It turned out to be a lousy lease for us.

A couple of miles up the beach they were building a condominium project—the Inn at Spanish Head. Your mother and I bought a couple of them. I liked the place, but it rained a lot. We had them for many years, even after we sold Amber's holdings.

I thought we were going to do more business in Lincoln City, but then we ran up against the city councilmen. They were against development. We had more land that we wanted to sell for other motels, but they said, "No you don't." By then they had removed their sewer plant from our land and they said now we didn't have a sewer. It was the excuse for denying us permits. We weren't getting anywhere. The Teipners were unhappy because we had a negative cash flow. They wanted out. We had some meetings with them at the Club Cal-Neva. They kept saying, "Sell the damn thing, we'll never be able to develop that land." Half the time they disagreed with our decisions. So, finally, we just bought them out. About that same time we acquired Ted's interest.

The Dunes Motel was doing so well that Hemstreet wanted to add onto it. We went to Portland and lined up the money from U.S. Bank—that's where he did most of his business. But then we couldn't get by the city council. They said we couldn't have water or sewer. They just blocked us. So we were in a negative cash flow position. We weren't getting enough out of the motel to pay off our loans. Hemstreet knew about motels, it was his business. He came to us with a proposition to buy us out. We weren't getting anywhere, so we sold to him for about double what we had in the motel project. We used the money to pay down our debt on the land. Eventually, Hemstreet changed the name of the Dunes to Shilo Inn. It was the first property of a big chain of hotels that the Hemstreets now own throughout the Pacific Northwest.

So now we still had Miracle Village and a lot of raw land. The rent from Safeway was poor, and the other stores in the

shopping center weren't doing much either. Finally, we found a buyer for Miracle Village and sold it. I can't remember if we lost money on the deal, but I know we didn't make any. We probably took a beating. We decided to get rid of the undeveloped land, too. We had some Mickey Mouse deals where people put down maybe $5,000 as earnest money and then walked away. We got their deposit but we lost a lot of time over them. We had other offers to buy just a part of the land, but we wanted to keep it intact. It was just kind of a big mess. Finally, we did sell the land. I don't remember what we got or who bought it, but again we didn't make anything—we were just happy to get out. I lost track of Jim Hemstreet; last I heard he was living in Palm Springs.

We were also stuck for quite awhile with another piece of land in Oregon. We bought sixty-five acres between Lincoln City and Depoe Bay. It seemed real cheap, about $180,000 for the whole caboodle. It was on the highway, but not on the ocean side. We thought maybe we were going to be pioneer developers, like in the early days of Southern California. But the people in Oregon come from a different planet. You just couldn't make headway with development there. I don't know how many trips we made trying to do something with that property. It wasn't until a year or two before I got out of the Club Cal-Neva that we were rid of it. Bill Thornton worked out a deal whereby we donated that land to some kind of Preserve Oregon group and took a tax write-off.

Even that wasn't the end of it. The plan called for a more aggressive write-off than if we had donated it, say, to the Salvation Army. About three years later the IRS disallowed a big part of it. We had to pay tax plus interest. So as far as the Oregon Coast goes, we could have starved to death up there. We made some money on the motel, but lost it in everything else. In terms of money we probably came out about even, but I hate to think of the man-hours we wasted in Oregon.

Bill Brenner is a fantastic guy, as honorable as the day is long and a wonderful contractor—but a lousy businessman. Bill used to come to the Club Cal-Neva frequently to gamble, and he

always had some project going. He was usually short on cash and we'd lend him money to complete it, and then he'd pay us back with some interest. He built all kinds of things, particularly motels. He was building some for Hemstreet. I remember one time he was building condominiums in Beaverton and he needed $400,000. He couldn't get any more credit so he promised to pay back $500,000 and throw in a condominium. I lent him some money on a motel project in Bakersfield, too.

I was in another motel deal with Bill in Washington state and I made some money on it. Then we had a deal together in Pendleton, about a 100-unit motel. After a while he couldn't make his part of the payments. I offered to carry him for a while, but he wouldn't hear of it. He insisted on signing his share over to me. So I flew up there with your brother David to look at it. For a while I had a lady in there running it. But the business was poor, maybe 30 or 40 percent occupancy. I put it up for sale, and for a while I was feeding it. When it did sell I think I made about a hundred thousand.

Another time Bill came to me for help to buy some land in Washington to grow apples. He had the rights to some special variety, maybe the Granny Smith, and the land was protected from the elements. His apples were ready for market two weeks or ten days before the rest of the market. I cosigned at the bank for him. He said "This is my old-age security. When everything else is gone I'll have this." Well, in two years it was gone.

Bill always paid me back what he owed, though not always on time. For many years he would pay the interest and just a little on the principal. Then his wife got Alzheimer's or something. I said, "Don't fret about the interest. If you never pay me back it's all right." He wouldn't hear of it. He insisted that I hold a mortgage on his house, and I offered to give it back anytime. He said, "No, you keep it. I know you won't force my wife out if something happens to me." Anyway, he paid me back every cent he owed. He could never get ahead because before he finished one project he was already into another. He's made a lot of people rich, but not himself.

My relationship with Katie Dodd led to other deals. After we leased her properties for the Club Cal-Neva she used to call me. She was an elderly maiden lady, and kind of lonesome I guess. She'd call and we would talk for hours. She placed great trust in me; she asked me for all kinds of advice. She always called me "Handsome Jack." She used to say to me, "Jack, I hope you're in heaven one week before the devil knows you're dead!"

Because of our relationship, the Club Cal-Neva became involved in two other transactions. One was the deal that eventually resulted in construction of the Onslow Hotel. We controlled the property under a lease. Ev Brunzell, Con Priess, and Gene Gastanaga wanted to build a hotel there. So I arranged the sale for Katie. She insisted as one of the conditions that it be called the Onslow Hotel. She had a brother named Onslow who was killed in a motorcycle accident, and she wanted to honor his memory. So that's how the new hotel got such an unusual name.

The other deal was what we referred to as the Block I property. Katie owned the block between Pine and Ryland and Virginia and Center, where U.S. Bank is today. It was a real problem property for her. Winkel Motors had been her big tenant, but they had moved out and their former space was boarded up. The Tower movie theater had closed, and so had the bowling alley next door. There was an office building at the corner of Pine and Virginia, the Sierra Pacific Power Company Building—they leased the land from Katie and she had some other tenants in there as well. Virginia Stevens had a lady's clothing store, there was a massage parlor, and then there was a television station in the back. Charley Springer, the attorney, had an office. That building was Katie's only income, and then Sierra Pacific Power decided to move and so did the television station. Basically, the whole block was a problem and pretty much of an eyesore, too.

Katie had an agency operating the building, and her attorney in Reno was Oliver Custer. She was unhappy with how they were running her building. There were lawsuits and a lot of back rent was owing. She asked if I could sell it for her. She said, "If you can't find a buyer you should buy it yourself, I'll give

you a good deal." I talked to Leon and we thought maybe one day that property, which we called Block I, could be a hotel site. So we optioned the building for $900,000. If we bought it we were going to have a forty year loan from Katie at 4 percent. I asked Custer for an accounting and he gave me a list of the tenants and what was owing. Springer was the worst case. He had just run for governor. He had this bumper sticker that said, "Atta boy, Charlie." I had to go to his office several times to catch him in because he was only open about half the time. I had met him a few times socially, and when I finally saw him I said, "Atta boy, Charlie, you owe rent to Katie Dodd and I'm the new man." He thought I was kidding. "No, I'm not kidding. I'm the guy who collects the rent or gets you out of there."

"Well, you know, that place isn't very good. The heat's lousy."

I said, "Charlie, you're going to pay the rent by the first or you're out. You're an attorney and I know that attorneys can stall matters. But Busey is my attorney and I think he's pretty good. So you'll pay or get out."

"Well, we'll see about that!"

He didn't pay on time but we had him out in thirty days. I sent someone over from the Club Cal-Neva to tell him, "Mr. Douglass said that I'm supposed to put a padlock on your door." Charlie called about two days later and said he was moving his stuff out. So that was the end of it.

With closed buildings and doubtful tenants I knew that the Block I property was always going to be a headache. But it was in a good location, close to the downtown. So I began to work on a hotel concept—we called it the Reno Mall Project. It was designed by the architect David Jacobsen, twenty stories tall. I thought we could build a hotel tower on our block, and put a big underground parking structure under the block to the north with passageways to the Riverside and the Pioneer Auditorium. It was a little bit like the Silver Legacy concept, except the links were to be underground. If we had managed to build that project, downtown Reno would be different today. The focus would have been more on the Truckee River. Now, of course, the town has

moved north. Fourth and Virginia is what Second and Virginia used to be.

I can't believe how many people I talked to on the Reno Mall Project. First I was dealing with John Q. Hammond, the biggest owner of Holiday Inns in America at the time. He was planning his project on Sixth Street. I told him it was a bad neighborhood and that he should consider coming down to our property instead. We offered to run the gambling for him. He seemed interested, but after about three months he said no.

Then in 1972 I had some discussions with A. N. Pritzker and Don Pritzker, who were out of Chicago. A. N. was the father and the chairman of the board of the Hyatt Hotels and Don was their president. Don ran their West Coast operation and I first met with him at his San Jose office. Actually, I think I first met him at a party at Leon Nightingale's house at Lake Tahoe. Anyway, they seemed to be pretty interested. He told me how they missed out in Las Vegas. At one point they almost bought the International from Kerkorian, the biggest property in the town. But then he discovered that it had $700,000 in outstanding markers. Don said, "That's what scared me off. Barron Hilton bought the property, and later he told me that he collected every penny on those markers. It was the biggest mistake I ever made, not buying the International!" So I was working with Don and then he went to Hawaii on vacation. He died of some kind of stroke on the tennis court; he was a young man, maybe about thirty.

After the Hyatt deal lost its momentum I worked with some local real estate developers for awhile—Dean Phillips and Jack Knorp. I also spoke with the president of the Travelodge chain and a Seattle builder Henry Graybrook. But we weren't getting anywhere, so I started working on the project with a money finder from L.A. named Tom Coughlin. The next thing you know we were talking to the Hilton people. They seemed real interested. We had several meetings with them. They assigned their number one Nevada man to the project. So we flew down to Las Vegas and stayed at their hotel, the International. That evening Barron, Tom, and I went to see Tina [Turner] and Ike.

I didn't know about her until then. She really tore up the stage. Next day we met and David Jacobsen unveiled his plan. Hilton's Vegas guy said he wanted to change the entry. He didn't care where we put the front desk, he wanted the customer to have to walk through the gaming to get to it. I thought that was pretty crude, but maybe he was right. Anyway, we agreed to the change.

We went to Chicago with Barron to meet with his top people there. He wanted them to evaluate the project. Then Barron got involved with Cavanaugh and my other Club Cal-Neva partners in the purchase of thirty or forty acres on Huffaker Lane. I stayed out of that one because I thought it was too far out of town. One day he flew into Reno with his wife to look at that deal. Since I was the odd man out I was assigned to entertain her. I drove her around Reno and she seemed to like it. After maybe three hours I drove her to the airport and they flew away. That was the only time I ever met Mrs. Hilton.

So, finally, we were scheduled for a meeting with Barron at his executive offices in Beverly Hills to finalize the deal. We were sure that we were going to make it. I was with Leon and Tom. They showed us into a vacant conference room, and after awhile Barron came in with Kirk Kerkorian. He introduced us and then said he had some things to discuss with Kerkorian before he could talk to us. He wanted us to come back in the afternoon. So we had lunch and went back there. He was maybe half an hour late. The first thing he said was, "We have made a decision. We're not going into Reno at this time. We don't like your location; it's not big enough. When we come to Reno we want to open the biggest place in town." So after maybe four months of stroking Hilton, we had hit the wall!

We went down to the bar and started drinking. I didn't care if we stopped. We had a real flat tire and I just wanted to forget about it. But then Coughlin said, "You know, there's a man in Minneapolis who might be interested. Maybe we can see him." So we decided to continue on from Los Angeles to Minneapolis. I had a contact there, too. I had become friendly with George Mikan, the professional basketball player. I met him in Maui

where he was involved in a hotel development—the Maui Sunset. He was friendly with my Maui friends, Ed Ige and Tom Yagi. George was a businessman in Minneapolis and he had played for the Lakers. Everyone in that city idolized him. I thought that since George was in the hotel business and had lots of contacts we might talk to him about our project.

Minneapolis had one giant skyscraper and it dominated the whole city—about seventy stories. George had his office there. I called him and he told us to come up, maybe to the fortieth floor. We discussed our deal, and he said, "Well, I'll introduce you to the godfather." He was referring to a banker in Minneapolis who dominated the scene. If he was interested you had a chance; if he said nay no one would listen to you. So we went over to the bank and met this very ordinary-looking guy in a plain suit. He seemed old—maybe sixty-five years old. We start to tell our story, "We have this property. We're in the gaming business and we know it well. We need to build a hotel—blah, blah."

He thought awhile and then said, "Well, the Radisson group here is interested in hotels. They are just starting out." He volunteered to call the head of Radisson—Curt Carlson. They only had three hotels at the time. They were in other businesses. Their main asset was trading stamps. I think they owned either Green Stamps or Blue Chip Stamps. He also had a big travel agency with business all over the world.

We made an appointment and he listened to our story. He said he didn't have any money. Then he said, "I think General Electric is lending money for hotels, but I don't know what they will say about gambling." In those days nobody wanted to lend money to the gaming industry. I thought he was pretty interested if we could find the money, because he told us a story. He said once he was travelling by car and got to Las Vegas. He went to one of the hotels and asked for a room. They asked if he had a reservation.

"No."

So they asked if he had a card. "What kind of card?"

"Well, we have a few rooms left for our cardholders—one star, two star, three star."

No card, so he had to drive on to some little town before he could find a room. That had impressed him a lot.

Carlson assigned us to one of his assistants—Jurgen Viltof. He had a Swedish or Norwegian accent. We had several meetings. He comped us into their Minneapolis hotel, which was quite beautiful. The upshot is that we all worked on the deal for quite awhile. We flew to Minneapolis, and Jurgen and his people came to Reno. We put them up in suites in Harrah's. We wanted to impress them and they liked the town. They went to look at sites near our two hospitals, too, because in Minneapolis they were building places where people could stay while their relatives were in the hospital. Carlson owned the Ardans property in Reno, too. We planned and talked a lot, but we never could raise the money for our project. General Electric wasn't interested in hotels with gaming. I think the Radisson people expècted us to raise the money, and we expected them to. Nobody did, so it never flew.

So I was back to square one. At some point we approached Steve Wynn. Warren knew him and showed him the property. Wynn said he liked the deal but he wasn't too sure that he was ready to come to Reno. He went back to Vegas and then called us, a little bit angry with the Club Cal-Neva. He said we had copied the decor of his keno game at the Golden Nugget when we remodeled ours. I also talked to Don Schwartz who represented the Del Webb hotels. No luck.

In 1977 I worked with George Murphy. I met him in Hawaii about the time he came to Reno to make some investments. He built the building at Liberty and Center Streets and the garage next door. He also built a big apartment complex on the Truckee River over by the Federal Building. He and his granddaughter lived there together for awhile.

George and I became pretty friendly. He was a very wealthy guy. He made his money with the Chevrolet dealership in Honolulu. Then he got some dealerships on the mainland, one in Los Angeles. I think he became the biggest Chevrolet dealer in

the West. Then he bought a huge ranch on Molokai, maybe half the island. We socialized and I visited his ranch. He was interested in the Reno Mall Project, but we couldn't put it together.

So we decided to just sell the Block I property. I had become very close to Parry Thomas during the Club Cal-Neva Lodge deal; we had moved our accounts to Valley Bank. Then Valley Bank decided to have one of their directors' meetings at Club Cal-Neva Lodge. The head of the bank, higher than Parry, was Mr. Sullivan. He was there and it is the only time I ever met him. He liked to play cards, and I remember after the directors' dinner a lot of us ended up in his suite playing gin rummy on his bed because there weren't enough chairs. Mr. Sullivan's son, Bob, was there and he was running the Reno branch of Valley Bank at the corner of Court and Virginia Streets, just across from the courthouse.

One day in 1977 Bob called and said he wanted to see me. I went to his office and Jerome Mack was there. He was the biggest stockholder in Valley Bank. He had a daughter who was a motion picture director in Hollywood. They named the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas after him and Parry.

So Bob said, "We want to build a new bank here and I know you own Block I. We would like to buy it."

"Fine, you people are my favorite bankers. You gave me money when we needed it. If we can work together on this, it would be fine."

They asked for a price, and I said $2.5 million. They thought it was too much for just a lot, which is all they wanted. They planned to tear everything down anyway and start over. We couldn't come to an agreement, but we ended on a friendly note.

So Bob called me four or five times. He kept insisting that they wanted the lot, but that $2.5 million was too steep. Finally, one day he came to my office at the Club Cal-Neva and offered us $1.75 million. I said, "You are our banker and have been very good to us. But we have always paid you what we owe you. We think that property is worth the two and a half million." So

I told him he should go look at the lot at Virginia and Liberty. I knew that Myneer Walker's lease on his service station was running out, and that the old Safeway store on the land owned by George Wingfield's brother had closed. I said, "You can get that land a lot cheaper. You should check it out." He said he didn't want to, but he must have, since that's where Valley Bank built its building.

So then George Aker, president of Nevada National Bank, came to see me in 1978. He thought Block I would be a nice location for his bank. He was very interested in the arts; I think he was the chairman of the board for Sierra Arts Foundation. In those days you could get a big tax deduction for donations to charities. George structured his offer in such a way that we would have a minimal tax impact. We were to exercise our option with Katie, then the next day sell the property to Sierra Arts Foundation—partly a sale and partly a donation—and the following day Nevada National Bank would buy the site from Sierra Arts Foundation. I know we got a tax break and Sierra Arts Foundation ended up with about a one million dollar endowment.

Anyway, we sold and George built his bank's headquarters on the site. Only shortly thereafter his bank started having problems. Then, too, they had a big, new building with offices for lease and they couldn't find tenants. I think George lost his job over that building. He left Reno. He is a very nice man and I was sorry to see him go.

We were involved in another deal that resulted in construction of the Maxim Hotel in Las Vegas. I was approached by Lud Corrao; he was putting the project together. A fellow named Bill Trent, an electrical contractor, and his brother Rod had this property tied up across from the MGM (Bally's today) in Las Vegas. Corrao and Trent put up about $500,000 and had some additional stock options. I was going to put up $500,000 and so was Leon Nightingale. We borrowed that $1,000,000 from Home Savings. Another fellow, Walter Probst from Palm Springs, was also in on the deal for $500,000. Art Wood was working the financial package. He was a brilliant man with

numbers. He had maybe $200,000 invested in the deal and an option for some more. Dick Lowden was an insurance man here in Reno. He was underwriting the project. He didn't have money to invest, so I think he agreed to leave his $50,000 commission in for a couple of points.

Then there was Tony Marnell and his son, Tony, Jr. I think Tony put up some cash but his son was an architect and he got some shares instead of a fee for designing the hotel. Tony Jr. was very sharp. He later designed Caesars's expansion. Tony and Lud founded Marnell-Corrao Construction Company, one of the biggest builders in the gaming industry. They were going to construct the Maxim Baby Grand, as we called it because we were across the street from the MGM Grand.

Joe Burt was going to work for us; he was a great hotel manager and a good guy. When I was later looking at a property in Laughlin he said he would quit the Maxim if he could work for me there. Nothing happened in Laughlin and a couple of years ago I heard Joe was the GM at the Aladdin. I called a couple of times to congratulate him but we never connected. Then he was killed in a motorcycle accident at the Grand Canyon. He was only about fifty-five.

We gave Phil Bryan an option, too. He worked for us at the Club Cal-Neva. He was a good pit man and we wanted to take him to Vegas to run our pit.

We also had Frank Modica, an Italian guy, who was working for the Showboat as general manager. He was going to be ours but Lud couldn't get along with him. We fired Frank and he went back to the Showboat. Later, when they went to Atlantic City they sent him there to open their property. I think he's still there running it. He's quite a big shot in the industry.

Well, we had our seed capital and we managed to build a 400-room hotel. But it wasn't large enough. We weren't making it, and the partnership had problems. Art Wood moved down there and I used to fly down for board meetings. We decided to build 400 more rooms and a parking garage, so we needed to find the money. Art Wood approached the Nevada Public Employees Retirement System and asked for a loan. Like I said,

he was a real professional and knew his numbers. It was an unusual loan for them, and we would never have gotten it if it weren't for Art—$12,000,000.

Anyway, now we had 800 rooms. But Lud was kind of a dictator. It was hard to work for him. He ran off the general manager and our chef. Lud and I got along; he never tried to push me too far. But then he got into it with Bill Trent. They were fighting like hell. I was on good terms with both of them, but they weren't speaking to each other. I would fly to Vegas every two weeks for the board meetings and they were very tense. Art Wood was staying in the hotel permanently, living right there. He was kind of the middle man.

We started making money and we tried to buy a little place next door. It was a Mickey Mouse property without rooms. Lud, Leon and I wanted to buy it, maybe for another tower, but Trent was opposed. At that point the partnership unravelled. It was time to sell out. We almost made a deal with Getty Oil. They were offering $30,000,000, but then they would blow hot and cold.

Art was the deal maker. One day after a board meeting Art and I were having a drink at the bar and he pointed out this chubby guy with Levi's on. He said, "He hangs around here a lot and asks questions. He's pretty nosy. I thought he must be working an angle for someone. I put security on him. The other day he leaves, gets into a cab and drives to the airport. He got into his private jet!" That was Jack Anderson, a big-time tomato farmer in the Central Valley.

So the next week when Anderson showed up Art rolled out the red carpet. Jack was a very plain, nice guy. He said he was looking to buy a Vegas property. He mentioned two others, but said he liked the Maxim. He asked who he should talk to. Art said, "You're talking to the right guy!" We were going back and forth with Getty, so Art said, "If you want me to take an offer to the owners I need to see your earnest money. Anderson gave him a check for $750,000. It didn't take long after that, maybe the six months he needed to get licensed.

Anderson paid us $30 a share and assumed that debt with PERS. We had paid $5 per share. I had 100,000 shares plus an option on 30,000 more, which I exercised as part of the sale. So for my $650,000 investment I got $3,900,000. Not a bad return! That was my entire profit, since the Maxim never paid a dividend. I did get my expenses and $500 for each board meeting I attended.

So we were out of the Maxim. I always got along well with Art Wood. But then he sent Leon and I a bill for $5,000 each for "consultation." He cited the work he did on the PERS loan and the Anderson deal. We weren't too happy, but we sent him a check for $2,500 each. He returned mine with a note saying, "Please forget about the whole thing. Thanks anyway, Art Wood." On Leon's he wrote "Dissolved December 31, 1981. Please destroy this bill and forget about it." He was real mad. Art was very feisty. I still talked with him after that, but then he retired and died.

I looked at a couple of other deals with Trent and Marnell, right about the time we were selling the Maxim. Emmett Munley had put together a hotel project in Laughlin, completed construction, but then couldn't get licensed. Bill Trent had been talking with him, and Emmett said he would sell the place. I went down there with your brother Dan and looked it over. Bill and I tried to put together a group, but it wasn't easy. Then on the fifth of July we decided to drive out there with our potential partners. It was so hot! There wasn't much business in Laughlin that day. We went through Emmett's place. It was completed, but they couldn't open anything more than the rooms. We could have bought it for $12,000,000. We decided not to, and Circus did. I think they paid for it in two or three years. It turned out to be one of the better properties.

I sent you out to Wendover to look over the Red Garter. That was another completed property owned by a group with licensing problems. Mark Chilton, an engineer from Elko, had some kind of option on it and wanted partners. Bill Trent and Tony Marnell, Jr. flew up to look it over with you. But then we decided Laughlin was better than Wendover. We were still

considering the Munley deal. By the time we decided against it the Red Garter was gone, too.

When they legalized gaming in Atlantic City I wanted to see it for myself. International Resorts was the first property there, and it was preparing its grand opening. You couldn't get a room, so I called the head of U.S. Playing Cards and asked for his help. Club Cal-Neva was a big account for their cards so he got Leon and me into Resorts. I went to the opening and had never seen anything like it, except maybe the night we opened the Club Cal-Neva. It was so packed you couldn't move. People were passing twenty dollar bills up through the crowd hoping that some stranger at the table would put down a bet for them.

David Jacobsen, our architect on the Cal-Neva Lodge project, was getting involved in Atlantic City at that time. He had tied up some old broken-down hotel on the Boardwalk. The prices there were unbelievable. Harrah's, MGM, Hilton, Del Webb were all trying to get in on the action. International Resorts had the first license; it had paid for the referendum. But now you had to build your hotel and then apply. Barron Hilton got really hurt by that. He constructed a property and was turned down because his manager couldn't pass muster. Hilton had to hold a fire sale.

We fooled around in Atlantic City for maybe a year. We talked to some brokers about going public with that old hotel property to raise the money for a big new hotel. The owner came to Reno a few times and we went to see him. But we never could put it together. When it was over we were only out travel expenses.

Chapter Nine

From the Club Cal-Neva to Colorado

IT WAS NEVER REALLY my intention to have you boys in the business. I had made my own life and I always thought that you should be free to make yours. You were the eldest and you didn't seem to have any interest in casinos. You went off to Chicago and Berkeley to become an anthropologist when David and Dan were still small children. I tried to help you a little bit with some stock in Home Savings, a piece of the Block I property and an interest in a slot concession at Fantastic Fair—the project Cavanaugh and I had on Oddie Boulevard—but I didn't really think you were ever coming back to Reno.

John was the first to show real interest in the business. He attended UNR just like you and he got a degree in anthropology. Now I had two sons in the anthropology business; I thought maybe you could open an old-bones store together! But after his graduation he came to me and asked if he could go to work for the Club Cal-Neva. He was only in his mid-twenties and he had no experience, so I didn't see how he could fit in. I didn't think he had anything to offer the Club Cal-Neva. So I called Jake Prior, the president of Security Bank, and asked if he could use John at the bank. Jake gave John a job; they trained him first to be a clerk and then a loan officer. They transferred him to Elko, and while he was there he left the bank and went into the insurance business.

At some point we were taking bids for the Club Cal-Neva's insurance and John asked if his agency could make a presentation. I said sure, and so he and his partner, Ray Jayo, met with our board. They did an impressive job and we gave them some business. Afterwards Ad Tolen said, "Why is John working in Elko? He should be here helping us out." Well, I would never have proposed that. Several of the partners had children, and I thought that if John came to work, then everyone would want their kids to get a job, too. But the other partners agreed with Ad, so John came to work for us. I sold him three points of the place out of my percentage so he would have some additional incentive.

When you were about forty your mother and I decided to help you out. By then Leon had given some points to his son Steve; Ad's son Gene was working for us; and Warren had his children Greg and Gail involved in the Club Cal-Neva. So your mother and I sold you three points and then we sold two points each to David and Dan.

At one time the income tax on dividends was as high as 70 percent, but on salaries it was capped at 50 percent. So there was an incentive to pay high salaries. We were doing that, but each partner's salary reflected his percentage. Then they changed the law and all income was taxed the same, but we had our salary system in place. So when I gave you three points you got an $18,000 salary, and Dan and Dave each got $12,000 for their two points. That all came out of my salary; you weren't expected to come into the place and work for it. Until Ad's son, Gene, came in John was the only one in your generation who worked in the Club Cal-Neva every day. He was going through different departments in order to learn the business. The partners were all happy with him.

In the late 1970s gaming in Reno started to explode. The MGM project led the way, but there were many others on the drawing boards. I knew the Shields family from Tonopah. Bob Shields, Sr. had a sheet metal company in Reno and he used to come into the Club Cal-Neva. He was kind of a gruff guy; he

liked the place and I used to buy him a drink from time to time. He was retired; his son Bob was in charge of the family business.

One day Bob Shields, Jr. came to see me. He said that he and Tom Donnells, a contractor, owned some property at Second and West Streets—the old Saviers and Osborn building. It used to be a big outlet in Reno for electrical appliances and phonograph records. They also had the funeral parlor that was next door. They were thinking of building a small hotel on the site, and Shields wanted to know if we would be interested in running the gaming. They were set up as Comstock Land and Development Company. I had met Tom when he came to the Club Cal-Neva to bid on one of our expansions. He didn't get the contract, but all the partners were favorably impressed with him.

Tom Donnells was good friends with Bob Cashell. Bob was stretched pretty thin at Boomtown, but he was prepared to put in some money. So I started having meetings with Shields, Donnells and Cashell in the Club Cal-Neva's board room. I told my partners that if any of us went for the deal everyone should, even if a partner only wanted to invest $1,000. I felt we should all be in the Comstock to avoid any jealousy or hard feelings later. We had a noncompetition clause in our bylaws, too, but I think by then it had already been compromised a little bit. Anyway, I said "We all go or nobody goes." They agreed.

Tom Donnells had good connections at Nevada National Bank, and we began to have meetings at his office on East Fourth Street. We were working out the financing and details for the partnership. The Club Cal-Neva partners formed Fiesta Corporation. It was going to be the operating group. Fiesta and Comstock Land and Development would each own 47 percent. We held out 6 percent for other limited partners. John Brevick, who was the manager of the Club Cal-Neva, got a point; so did Ralph Albright the Club Cal-Neva's controller. Chuck Tinder, who came up with the theme, ended up with a point, and our attorney, Bill Sanford, had a position as well. We insisted that I would be chairman of the board and that Fiesta would have three of the five seats on it. So we remained in operational control of the place. Otherwise we didn't want to participate,

since we were going to have to make the daily management decisions.

Chuck Tinder is an architect and he worked up a design of a street scene in Virginia City. I thought it was just wonderful and we all adopted it. Actually, it was quite a bit different from the Comstock's theme today. We have gradually strayed away from Chuck's original plan.

Anyway, we sold interests in the project for $20,000 a point. Comstock Land and Development included several limited partners. Some were local and others were from northern California. Some were friends of the Shields and others of Donnells. Fiesta decided to name your brother John as the project's general manager. By then he had been at the Club Cal-Neva for a few years.

Construction of the Comstock coincided with the big explosion of new properties in Reno in 1978-1979. Del Webb's Sahara-Reno, the Harrah's tower, the Sundowner, et cetera. A serious study should be published one day about that period, because it totally changed the town. It was a real boom time. People were camped out on the river. My friend Bill Brenner tried to get some land for affordable housing projects in Fernley, and so did the Cavanaugh family. Fernley became a bedroom community for Reno.

The original Comstock was nine stories. It had 160 rooms. We didn't want the place to look empty so we even partitioned off part of the casino floor and didn't open it. Our restaurant was on the main floor, too. We opened in 1978, just about the same time that Resorts International started in Atlantic City. I remember that well because over the next couple of years I would think to myself, "If I had bought Resorts's stock with the same money I put in this place I'd be better off." Resorts's stock tripled in just a few months. But then the Comstock started to make some money as well. I don't think we ever had a "call"—the partners were never required to put up any more money beyond their original investment.

After the casino construction boom everyone was a little nervous. Would the bubble burst or would Reno grow its

market? Well, it became clear that we had grown our market. So we decided to expand the Comstock. We wanted to move the restaurants upstairs to provide more gaming space on the main floor. We also wanted to add meeting and banquet facilities, a health club and swimming pool, and a top floor of upscale suites for our best customers. We planned to increase the rooms from 160 to 310.

Tom Donnells was pushing us to make the commitment. It was going to double our debt, but FIB was willing to lend the money. Water service was a big question since Sierra Pacific Power was willing to issue a will-serve letter but only if we got started right away because there was a lot of pressure to cap growth in Reno. Tom said, "We have a window of opportunity here, but I think it will close by this time next year." Actually, he was wrong about that because, when the national economy went into a recession, the no-growth sentiment here declined quite a bit; but we decided to take Tom's advice. The construction took more than a year and was very disruptive. By the time it was done we had pretty much chased away our regular customers. We had to start over again to build up the business. The first year we lost money, but then things got better.

By that time I was having some serious problems with my Club Cal-Neva partners. There were some pretty strong personalities in the Club Cal-Neva partnership. When we started the Club Cal-Neva, Leon didn't mind being in business with his former partners from their failed deal at Lake Tahoe because he knew we had the final say. He thought Howard, Ad and Warren were stronger on the operational side, the gaming part, rather than with business in general, and I came to agree with him.

Warren and Howard were old buddies. They both came to Reno from Montana. Warren went to work at Harrah's after he got out of the army. He used to say that he had a chance to become Harrah's partner. To my mind that is very questionable; Bill never wanted partners. Anyway, Warren didn't stay there for very long. Then he and Howard had the Waldorf together. Warren ran it while Howard travelled around the country buying and selling army surplus goods. He made some money at that,

but then he lost quite a bit on a few deals. Someone offered to sell Warren a few cases of whiskey if he would also buy Southern Comfort. Despite its name, "Southern Comfort Whiskey," it is a sweet liqueur. You couldn't have sold as much as Warren bought in all of Reno since the founding of the town. So that about broke the Waldorf.

I feel that Leon and I worked well together and became close friends. We trusted each other completely. He was a good businessman, very levelheaded. He didn't always have a lot of compassion for someone if he was down, but Leon would never take advantage of his partners. Probably his weakest point was that he was stubborn. Once he made up his mind he didn't bend much. He liked being president.

Leon and I didn't always get along with Warren. He is a big-I kind of guy. We didn't like his braggadocio. I'm sure Warren had his complaints about us, too. Anyway, we both respected Warren's knowledge of gaming. He is very good at what he knows best. He had a real knack for the intricacies and percentages of the games.

Howard was a sweet man. Everybody loved Howard. Our board meetings would get pretty rough sometimes, and Howard never wanted us to argue about anything. It upset him. When his health failed he had to stop coming. Ad was a me-too guy; very loyal to Warren. There was never a question where he would come down on any issue. If Warren had told him to go out and lie down in front of the traffic, he would have done it.

Leon and I ran the place. I had John's vote, so we controlled 65 percent of the stock between us. When Howard stopped attending meetings Warren had his proxy. It's not that we voted on things, but everyone understood the reality if it should ever come to a vote. Then John Cavanaugh died, and there was concern over the Club Cal-Neva stock in his estate. Leon and Warren didn't want John Jr. in the business. They had had some dealings with him during a land deal out on South Virginia. I wasn't a part of that. Anyway, Leon said he was against John Jr. coming to work at the Club Cal-Neva. I assumed that if Marge got the stock she would ask my advice. I thought I would have

that vote, just like when John was alive. Then she attended a meeting and somebody told her that John Jr. couldn't have a job; so she decided that the Club Cal-Neva stock should go to her daughter, Barbara. Bill Thornton, her husband, came to work as our attorney and as Barbara's representative. She never took an active interest in the business as far as I know. I'm not sure that she has ever set foot in the place. I assumed that Bill would be on my side in any vote.

Then Warren and I got into a beef. He wanted to put a $50,000 jackpot on two of our slot machines and I thought it was too high. They were called the Extra-Extra machines. I said they wouldn't make more than regular dollar machines, and Warren said they would. So we made a bet—$10,000—and in six months we were to see. We wrote it down, and one of the conditions was that the machines could not be altered in any way. He couldn't take them off the floor. I went to Hawaii for three months and when I got back the Extra-Extra machines looked different. They were doing well, and Warren wanted his $10,000. But those machines were now called Big Jackpot machines. Warren said he hadn't changed the percentages, just the format to make them look more attractive. I refused to pay; I said the bet was off. So Warren sued me.

We went to trial. The judge called us into his chambers and said, "I don't want to try this case. The way I read it you are both right to a point. I hate to make a decision based on some technicality." He wanted us to come to an agreement, but we couldn't. I was going to call Willie Sommer, our slot manager, to testify that he had changed the format of the machines. Well, when we got to court Bill Thornton was sitting with Warren, listening to the case. When we broke for lunch I asked him what he was doing there, and he said, "I'm going to testify for Warren. I think he's right and you are wrong."

I said, "You're a partner over there, and when two partners are having this situation you are going to testify for one of them?"

"Yes."

I went to the Club Cal-Neva and called a partners meeting for that afternoon. I questioned how our partnership could exist if partners started testifying for and against each other. I said, "I'm not asking Leon to stand up for me. I don't expect him to testify. This is between Warren and me."

Thornton said, "Well, I'm going to testify for Warren."

All the partners were there, so I turned to Warren and said, "I'm going to pay you $10,000 and that's the end of it. The case is over. You win because you would let a partner testify. I don't know what he was going to say, but it makes me sick to my stomach having partners fight each other."

From then on I knew that Warren had Bill Thornton in his pocket. Leon and I had lost Cavanaugh's vote. We had one last chance to regain control of the Club Cal-Neva. Howard had given Warren his proxy, but he was still alive. Leon and I went to him and made him an offer. The Club Cal-Neva had first right of refusal, so we couldn't buy his stock ourselves, but if we divided his interest *pari passu* Leon and I together would hold slightly over 50 percent. I can't remember the price, but we agreed on one. And then Howard said, "What about the bankroll? I want my part of the bankroll." He wanted his 14 percent of the cash-on-hand, and we said it was included in the price of his stock. So our deal unravelled over that. We should have agreed to give him his share of the bankroll. If we had, it would have been a very different story at the Club Cal-Neva.

I could see other problems as well. There were getting to be too many Douglasses around. Your brother John had his interest and he had worked there. Then I gave you an interest and you were on the board. After that David and Dan got their stock and they were coming around from time to time. Five Douglasses. Leon only had Steve. Warren had Greg and Gail. Ad had Gene. So we had as many Douglasses as the other partners had children in the business. I think that made Leon nervous. He was surrounded by five Douglasses and three Nelsons.

Then when I was in Hawaii for the winter Leon called you in and told you to stop coming to board meetings. He said that if you came, then Gail Nelson could come, too. Leon and I had

an argument about that when I got back. But I could see the handwriting on the wall. I told Leon, "If you can think of any way that we can get 51 percent of the place I'll stay. Otherwise, I think the Douglasses should sell out." So we began negotiating a price. I wanted $600,000 a point. But we also had to negotiate a price for their stock in Fiesta Corporation. The Club Cal-Neva group owned Fiesta, which was the operator of the Comstock Hotel and Casino. They wanted $85,000 per point for Fiesta. It went back and forth. We had to come down to about $550,000 and they went down to $70,000. Then there were some offsets regarding some undistributed earnings. Anyway, we netted around $500,000 a point—I think it was top dollar. I'm not sure the Club Cal-Neva is worth that much today. On December 17, 1986, we sold our interest.

At that time I moved my office to the Comstock. We Douglasses had been in business together in the Club Cal-Neva and I thought we should stick together. You all had quite a bit of money from the Club Cal-Neva sale, and I thought you should use some of it to help me gain control of the Comstock. After my experience at the Club Cal-Neva I wanted to have at least 51 percent of the shares so there would never be any question of control. Your brother David didn't buy into the place, but the rest of you did. So we took all of the Fiesta stock held by the Club Cal-Neva partners as part of our payment for our interest. That gave us all of Fiesta.

At some point Bob Cashell wanted to sell his stock in Comstock Land and Development. I was interested in buying it, but Tom Donnells was opposed. He knew that with Cashell's stock we would have an absolute majority of the Comstock. So he bought Cashell's stock. It was quite a stretch for him because he suffered some serious financial reversals up in Alaska with his construction business. After awhile he couldn't afford to hang on to his stock, and he sold some of it to Phil Griffith. It is my understanding that Phil did that as a favor to Tom. They were close friends. Phil was just warehousing the stock until Tom could get back on his feet.

But then Tom died. After about two years Fiesta decided to make an offer to all of the shareholders in Comstock Land to buy their stock. Almost half of it was tendered and I arranged a bank loan for you, Dan, John, Ralph Albright and Bill Sanford to buy the shares. At my age I didn't need to hold any more personally. FIB agreed to lend you half of the money with my guarantee, and I lent you the other half.

So now we had considerably more than 51 percent of the Comstock, but not controlling interest of Comstock Land and Development. Mrs. Shields and her daughter kept a big piece, and Phil Griffith held the largest bloc—about ten percent of the whole property. He didn't think $70,000 was enough, but he was motivated to sell. I don't think it was ever his intention to be a partner in the Comstock.

You and Ralph occupied the two Comstock Land seats on the board, but then Phil said he wanted to see the numbers regularly and he wanted a seat on the board. I think it was mainly a ploy to get us to make him an offer and it worked. We weren't comfortable with the idea of having one of our competitors on the board, and privy to our numbers and business plan. We made Phil an offer and bought his stock at a premium. We bought it as a company, and every shareholder received a proportionate increase in their position. So now the Douglasses own nearly three-quarters of the place. It's my job to keep you out of trouble!

Actually, my main role here has been similar to what I was doing at the Club Cal-Neva. I have been negotiating several land deals. Our biggest problem was the neighborhood—it was really run down. At the corner of Second and West there was an old building with gas pumps. It was where Bill Harrah used to service his car collection. The Club Cal-Neva had it as a storage area, and it was a real eyesore. There was a closed gas station at Arlington and Second with a cyclone fence around it. The Senator Hotel was pretty bad. The sidewalk in front of it was broken, and there was no light. At Second and Sierra the Gold Dust Casino was boarded up and all dark at night. So if you

looked towards the Comstock from Second and Virginia, it seemed far away—an island of light surrounded by blight.

I began to negotiate for the properties around us. I tied up Paul's Liquor Store on Arlington on a lease/purchase option basis, and we moved our computing, controller and personnel offices there. We made a similar deal for the closed service station. It was owned by Mrs. Whidett. We demolished it and put in a nice parking lot. So now the backside of the Comstock was cleaned up.

The Club Cal-Neva building to the north was owned partly by Sid Robinson and partly by some people from California. Their interest was handled by the Trust Department at FIB. Sid came to me and said he wanted to sell, and so we bought his share. Meanwhile, we leased the big lot behind the building from Mrs. Chism. The people from California didn't really want to sell, but if we demolished the Robinson part of the building their property was scarcely useable. They came up from California to have a look, and when they realized their predicament they agreed to sell. We demolished all of the building except where Rivoli's restaurant is still today. We made a nice, landscaped parking lot out of the building site and Mrs. Chism's lot.

To the east we had the problem of the Senator Hotel. I thought one day it might be a good location for a new tower if we ever wanted to expand the Comstock. Meanwhile, it needed cleaning up. The grocery store on the corner was a real hangout for street people. They used West Street as a corridor from the Reno Gospel Mission to the park on the river. They would buy their booze in that grocery store and congregate in front of it. Our customers had to run a gauntlet in order to go downtown.

The Senator is owned by Harry Schwengberg. I knew him from Our Lady of Snows church. He spent most of his life in South America. I went to see him. He wanted to sell the building, but it was too much money just to warehouse it. I thought it would be better if we could tie it up on a lease/purchase option basis. We made a deal and we replaced the sidewalk and installed awnings with good lighting. We put our slot shop and laundry in the back of the property. Eventually, we installed a

health clinic which was then operated for the employees of downtown businesses by Washoe Med. We continue to operate the hotel and sublease the businesses on Second Street. We required the grocery store to cut down on the loitering, so that corner is not such a problem any longer. We basically improved the neighborhood on three sides of the Comstock. The situation to the south was already taken care of by the Reno Plaza. It's a nice property that is a feeder for our business. We use its rooms when available for our overflow.

I also bought the property that is the Riverboat Hotel and Casino today. When John Cavanaugh, Jr. couldn't come into the Club Cal-Neva after his father's death he decided to get into the gaming business on his own. He acquired the Gold Dust West, which he still has, and he put together some old buildings on the southeast corner of Second and Sierra and built the Gold Dust. He renovated some existing old hotel rooms and built 120 new ones. He also had a lot at the northwest corner of First and Sierra and another little lot next to the Sanford Building on Sierra. At one time he had big plans to build a hotel tower on the First and Sierra site and connect it with a skywalk to the rest of the project. I think it would have been Reno's first skywalk.

Anyway, John took on quite a bit of debt at a floating interest rate. It was just when the U.S. economy started to have hyperinflation. The interest rates went right through the roof and John was struggling. He came to me and asked if I would go through his numbers and give him my opinion. I studied them and told him I thought he should close the property immediately. It was losing badly and I couldn't see any relief. He disregarded that advice, and about eight months later Valley Bank foreclosed on his note. They were owed a lot of money—I think it might have been over $10 million. John was able to salvage the Gold Dust West; he only lost the downtown property.

I was still in the Club Cal-Neva about that time and I told Leon that we should look at the Gold Dust. It had a lot of real estate in the downtown, and I thought the rooms could help the Club Cal-Neva. I called Parry Thomas in Las Vegas. He said that a lot of supposed buyers had blown smoke at him and he

was getting discouraged. He said he wanted me to buy it and that he'd drop his price to $7 million. I agreed to talk to my partners, but there wasn't any interest.

The property remained closed and boarded up. And then Charlie Mapes lost the Money Tree to the bank, too. So from the Comstock as you looked down Second Street towards Virginia there were two dead properties—a real barrier to any foot traffic that we might have had.

At some point a Chinese group tried to put together a deal on the Gold Dust. They wanted to make it an Asian place. But they planned to finance their deal by selling penny stock, and the state wouldn't go for it. Then some guy from California had an option on both the Gold Dust and the Money Tree. He even started some demolition in the Gold Dust to move its bar fixtures to the Money Tree. But then his deal fell through.

Anyway, one day Parry Thomas was going to be in Reno and he wanted to have lunch. I think your brother John and maybe Dan came along. Parry wanted to show me the Gold Dust. I hadn't actually been in it since Cavanaugh closed it. Parry said he was tired of fooling around with the property; he just wanted to sell. "Jack, you tell me what you'll pay and how you want to finance it." So I offered him $4 million cash—no financing. "You've got a deal. We'll work up the papers."

I asked for a key so I could take a look inside the property. You and your brothers came on the tour. The watchman took us around. In some places there was water dripping down from badly damaged ceilings. The main floor was all torn up by the guy who moved the bar fixtures across the street to the Money Tree. Cavanaugh had had a fire in the old part and a number of those rooms were boarded up. The new part was in good condition; he had only operated it for maybe a year before the foreclosure. There was reasonably new furniture in the rooms which was owned by Bill Thornton.

So I called Parry and said that the public area was ruined and I would only pay $3.75 million for the property. He agreed to that, but then the day we were to close the deal I decided that was too much and offered $3.5 million. As it turned out, he was

on his way into the operating room in Las Vegas. When they told him that he basically said, "Tell Douglass he can go to hell!" It was obviously impossible to continue negotiating, and it was getting late in the afternoon. I had that commitment at $3.75 million that was going to run out that day. So about 4:00 p.m. I sent Dan to Valley Bank with a $250,000 check to secure the deal.

This was about the time we were leaving the Club Cal-Neva, and I bought the Gold Dust myself, just as an investment. I set up Carnival Corporation and gave you kids stock options for 20 percent each in it. Carnival held the Gold Dust property. But, of course, the place was in ruins. I was trying to think of what to do with it. First I had to negotiate with Bill Thornton for the furniture. He had been some kind of partner with John in the Gold Dust, and had leased/purchased the furniture. He wanted maybe $110,000 and I offered $90,000. We went back and forth and couldn't agree. So finally I said, "Let's cut cards for it." I lost.

Anyway, it didn't make sense to me to reopen the casino as it was. The old part was going to be a real problem. I thought maybe we could put a Longs drugstore in there. With all our visitors and casino workers the downtown needs something like that. At one time Second and Sierra was the heart of shopping in downtown. Montgomery Wards, Sears, Penney's and lots of small stores were right around there. At Christmas time all of Reno shopped the area. So I thought it could support at least one big 24-hour operation store providing a wide array of merchandise, even clothes. I wrote to Longs and some other big stores, but never got anywhere.

Then I saw a new concept on television called Photon. It was going to sweep the country. It was a game where you put on an electronic helmet, carried a laser gun and went into a maze where you had combat with other players. I sent you and your brothers to their center in New Jersey and their headquarters in Dallas to look into it. For awhile you and John had an option on the Seattle market. I thought Photon might be real popular with

the casino workers—you could organize teams from each casino. But we couldn't get the Reno franchise.

Then you and John started talking to the Onslow group about maybe leasing them the property so they could tie it into their hotel. They were having problems and they thought that the Gold Dust's rooms would help them. They wanted to link the properties with a skywalk across the alley. You thought you had a deal and set up a lunch to finalize it. They were going to pay $35,000 a month to lease the building. But then we went to lunch there and Con Priess sat down and said, "We're only going to pay $25,000 and you have to build us the skywalk, too." So that killed the lunch and the deal.

So we weren't getting anywhere. At one point I was having lunch with Ralph Albright and he turned over a keno ticket and drew a Riverboat concept on the back of it. He said, "Jack, why don't you take the Gold Dust and put a façade on it that turns the whole exterior into a Riverboat. Use the building as your sign. You could reopen the casino and hotel." Well, I didn't act on that, but that year when I got back from Hawaii you came to me with a presentation of that concept. You had put a group together and wanted to lease the property. You planned to take the old part of the structure down. It couldn't be saved. I also knew you didn't have the money to build a new building in its place. I had owned the Gold Dust for maybe three years by then. I wasn't getting anywhere with it, so I agreed to your proposition. The problem was that you were too small—just 120 rooms.

I always thought that the idea of joining the Onslow and the Gold Dust together made sense. When the Onslow got into trouble Con Priess and Gene Gastanaga asked me to come and see them. They wanted to sell me the Onslow. I looked at their numbers and they weren't good. The property was in a lot of trouble. They wanted way too much, so I didn't buy it. Then shortly after you opened the Riverboat they closed the Onslow. Eureka Savings and Loan in California and Coast Savings and Loan in Florida had most of the debt on the place. First Western Savings in Las Vegas only had about 12.5 percent, I think, but

they were the lead institution for the others because they presumably knew something about gaming. Ralph Albright and I talked to their representative and agreed on a price—maybe $5.5 million, which was way below the money owing on the property; maybe seven or eight million. They were going to have to finance it for us as part of the deal. But then Coast Savings sent some kind of consultant here as a hatchet man and he nixed the deal. He said we would have to pay a lot more.

Well, about that time the savings and loan scandal was scaring the government, and I guess some federal auditors looked at Coast Savings's portfolio and saw that they owned a big piece of a closed hotel-casino in Nevada. The feds were real unhappy about that. Suddenly, Coast Savings wanted to make a deal.

Meanwhile Carnival Corporation was negotiating with the city for sale of its land at First and Sierra. The city planned to build a parking structure there. That was the engine that was going to make the car go. Anyway, when First Western called and said they wanted to sell I offered them $2.75 million for the Onslow, plus they had to agree to lend some money to the Riverboat to remodel the Onslow and build the skywalk across the alley. About that time we sold the parking lot and applied these funds towards the purchase price of the Onslow. So in building the Parking Gallery, the city also managed to clean up one of the closed properties in the downtown.

In today's world the Riverboat is still too small. But at least by marrying the two properties together it is now viable. You still have room there to expand someday if you want to. You could build a tower—maybe five hundred rooms.

You and John and Ralph Albright took the initiative in the Riverboat; but I worked with your brothers Dan and Dave in other deals. In 1985 Cal Kinney brought me a deal, and your brother Dan got involved. Cal thought we could tie up the northeast corner of Fifth and Virginia, kitty-corner from Circus Circus. His idea was to build a small casino with some rooms. The 300-room-minimum rule to have a new casino was about to go into effect, and we thought we might be able to get in under

the wire with fewer rooms—maybe just a hundred. We worked up a design with Peter Wilday. We planned to put up a sign like the Circus clown, only it would be an old prospector. We wanted to call the place Western Willie's.

The Browns (William, King and Maurice) owned the property and Cal was trying to get a lease/purchase option on it. We met with the brothers; they thought the concept was a great idea but they didn't want to sell. They had four or five motels around town, and they wanted us to buy a motel or two and then trade. They wanted them to be close to Circus. So we would talk to some owners and then we'd go back to them. They would say, "Well, that's a good one. We might take it and two more for our property."

I thought Western Willie's was a no-brainer. It was right across from Circus Circus with all its foot traffic. I told Leon he should come in. It was going to cost maybe seven million dollars to build, and we might have to put up two to three million ourselves. I couldn't see how it could miss. But it turned out that the Browns were the toughest guys in the world to make a deal with. They were very nice, but you could never pin them down. And then the bank wanted our personal signatures rather than just the property to make the loan. So Western Willie's ran out of steam. Actually, I think George Karadanis finally bought that property from the Browns and later sold it to John Iliescu. It's a great piece of property—I think Iliescu still has it.

Well, that got Dan Douglass started thinking about property on Virginia Street. About that time the El Dorado and Fitzgerald's were buying the railroad property between Commercial Row and Third Street on the west side of Virginia. They were planning some kind of joint project together on the site—the El-Fitz. It never happened and they later divided their interests; I guess it was so that the El Dorado could build its suites. Anyway, at the time on the south side of the tracks there was a little casino, a small slot arcade really, called the Gem. Richard Drake, who had the Turf Club, also had the lease on the Gem. It was just a thirty-day railroad lease, but he had been in there for some time.

Somehow Dan started talking to Drake, and he wanted to sell his license. The El-Fitz project was going to take out the Gem, and the idea was to argue before the city council that an exception should be made to allow the Gem's license to be moved—Drake was losing his location through no fault of his own. So the matter went before the council and they passed a resolution permitting transfer of Drake's license.

About that time there was a bankruptcy sale of the property at the southeast corner of Virginia and Fourth, right across from the El Dorado. Originally, it was called Ross Arms and was owned by Anna Ross. She had sold it and the buyer had gone broke. So Dan thought we could get that property and move Drake's license there. All four of you boys set up Douglass Brothers to buy it. You were planning to put in a small casino there called the Fiesta, with an Hispanic theme.

The tenants were all on short leases and you got them out. You were just about ready to proceed when Carano finally realized what was happening. Even though the city council had already approved the deal he wanted to reopen the matter. He argued that he had not been noticed at one of his addresses (the El Dorado was sitting on several parcels) and so there should be a rehearing. It was really just a ploy to head off competition.

So there was a rehearing and both Don and Phil Griffith showed up. They both made their speeches about their "good friends the Douglasses, but . . . . " The council voted to reverse itself. We probably had good grounds for a lawsuit. We had purchased a building in good faith on the strength of the council's action, and now we were stuck with it. There was one problem. The railroad had never noticed Drake that he was to be out in thirty days. As long as the El-Fitz project didn't do so, the trigger hadn't actually been pulled on Drake's license. In fact, Dan made his own deal with Drake and took over the Gem. He ran it for a couple of years. Then the El Dorado and Fitzgerald's wouldn't renew his lease, so he closed the Gem.

When gaming was about to be legalized in Colorado Cal Kinney went there and started looking around in both Cripple Creek and Blackhawk. Cal was working closely with a Reno real

estate developer, George Brown. They invited me to go to Colorado to look things over. It was a different world! The real estate values in the three towns where gaming had been legalized were going through the roof. The gaming tax was going to be much higher than in Nevada—about 20 percent. Also, there were lots of building restrictions to preserve the historic character of the towns, like in Deadwood, South Dakota. The table limit on blackjack was a negative factor, too, since it was five dollars a hand. You could play more than one at a time, but it was still not going to attract real gamblers.

Even so, there was a huge scramble going on, lots of suitors that thought the gaming business is a sure thing and lots of landowners with stars in their eyes. One big problem was the rule that you had to preserve the historic character of every building. You couldn't buy four buildings with 25-foot frontage each and demolish them to build a 100-foot structure. So each place was going to be a mom-and-pop operation—maybe 50 or 100 slots. You could link those four properties together behind their existing facades, but that entailed some tricky design issues. Also you had to get your approvals, which was far from automatic.

In retrospect a lot of bad deals were made in Colorado. People who knew nothing about the business lost their shirts. Some landowners who believed that they had made sweetheart deals ended up with their property back after someone changed it into a tiny casino and then went broke. However, Colorado has been real good for some operators, including Bronco Billy's in both Blackhawk and Cripple Creek, two of the operations that I became involved with.

Anyway, Cal and George Brown took me to Colorado while he was still putting his deals together. We went to Central City and Cal introduced me to several different people. I was a real, live gambler! They wanted to see if I had horns and a tail! Cal pointed out several places in both Central City and Blackhawk that he was looking at.

Next day we drove to Cripple Creek. First we looked at this one property with a soda fountain and little restaurant. The

owner lived in a downstairs apartment on the premises. He and his wife were anxious to sell. They had several offers. Cal and George were trying to lease the place with an option to buy for maybe $250,000. Eventually, they got that property and put in a casino called the Narrow Gauge. They decorated it with a train that went around a track up near the ceiling. But the Narrow Gauge turned out to be a failure and closed. It was too small and at the end of the street.

We looked at another property in Cripple Creek. It was owned by a woman who wanted to sell. She had her storefront and a vacant lot in the back. All this time I could tell that I was along as window dressing—the gambler from Nevada. I liked Cripple Creek. It was open; not like Central City and Blackhawk, which were in the bottom of a canyon.

Anyway, we went back to Denver to the airport where we had a prearranged meeting with Terry McMullen. He was from Sparks. Cal and George were trying to interest him in their deals, but for some reason he couldn't make the trip with us. He and his wife were going to retrace our steps, and then we were scheduled to all meet back in Reno to discuss things. On the plane back I told Cal and George that Colorado had some potential and I was prepared to put in some money, maybe $150,000, to help them tie up the real estate.

Back in Reno Terry said that he had decided against investing in Colorado. But by then George Brown brought Sam Jaksick, the original developer of Lakeridge, into the deal. We began having regular meetings at the Comstock. We put together maybe $600,000 and formed Pioneer Group to secure real estate. Your brother David was looking for something to do at the time, so I put him into the deal. Then we began looking for some other partners. We wanted to sell 49 percent of Pioneer Group for $5 million to get our working capital. For awhile I was dealing with a lady in Los Angeles, but she turned out to be just a broker. Then we were talking to a couple of Texans and again our "principals" were jobbers. Before it was over we had had a lot of talk and there was no cash to show for it. So we had to come up with the money ourselves and downsize the program.

Actually, for awhile we had a property optioned in Central City which we sold for a $250,000 profit, so that helped.

First we concentrated on Cripple Creek. Your brothers David and Dan went back there and we were remodelling both the Narrow Gauge and Bronco Billy's. Dan was on the point, working with the contractor. Dan had a little piece of the action as well. When they opened I thought he might stay there for awhile. He was commuting back and forth from Reno. He got things up and running, but then he missed his son Sam too much and decided to resign his position in Colorado. Cal had two friends who were operating a bed-and-breakfast place in Nevada City. He brought them to Cripple Creek and they learned the gaming business. They run Bronco Billy's there today, and it's one of the best properties in town. It's now expanded a couple of times.

We also got involved in Blackhawk. We tied up the property next to Hemmeter's Bullwacker's. It's a great location, although the lease is too tough. They recently expanded that Bronco Billy's as well, and it is starting to do well. David moved to Colorado and runs the Blackhawk Bronco Billy's. Dan's out of Colorado and I'm not on the licenses either. I sold David my interest.

So I keep coming to work down here at the Comstock. I preside over the board and follow your reports on all the business deals you are trying to make in Indian gaming. Here we helped the Siletz Tribe as their consultant to get into the gaming business in Lincoln City, Oregon. That was a real lesson in just how small the world is. Twenty-five years ago or more our Amber Corporation group bought a ranch that belonged to some Indian orphans. We built the motel there that ultimately became the first Shilo Inn. Then you and John come along and help the Siletz buy some of that same land back from Jim Hemstreet's son. Where were you guys during those tough years when I couldn't find a buyer for that parcel? And now there is a beautiful casino, Chinook Winds, on that site that is bigger than the Comstock and Riverboat combined. Not very much surprises me anymore.

Chapter Ten

CONCLUSION

AND SO NOW I AM pretty close to the end of my trail. I come down here to the Comstock every day because if I stop I think it might just be over for me. You can't live for as long as I have without learning something from all you have observed. Yet the real mysteries of life remain mysterious. When it comes to religion, for example, I don't have the answers. I'm not certain about anything. What I do know is that people who believe in something have greater strength and resolve than those who don't. They have something that guides them in life and helps them through the tough times. In that sense alone I think religion is a good thing.

I grew up in a strong Irish Catholic family, but by the time I left home, and certainly before I met your mother, I wasn't a church-goer. One of my buddies in the army was a strong Catholic, and once in awhile he would talk me into going to mass. There wasn't much to do in the Philippines, so I went along, but not really out of devotion.

Then one day shortly after the war you got very sick. You started running a high temperature and you couldn't breathe; I was afraid we were going to lose you. The doctors put you in the hospital and I was desperate. I went to the nearby Our Lady of Snows church to see the priest there. It was Sunday morning and mass was just letting out. I didn't go inside, I waited to talk to

the priest. When he came out I said, "Father, I live just down the street at the corner of Plumas and Martin. I have a son who is real sick. I want you to say mass and pray for him. If he gets better I'll come to your church." I think it took you about five minutes to get well, and I've been stuck ever since!

That wasn't the only example, either. By the time you were in the eighth grade you were very devout. You were planning to go to the seminary the next year. You came home one day and got on my case about some kind of devotional prayer. You wanted me to make a permanent vow to say it daily. First I had to say the little prayer and then an "Our Father" and ten "Hail Marys." I said, "Hey, I've got my own prayers," but you wouldn't let up. Finally, I agreed. Then you went to the seminary for a year, left, and next thing I know you didn't want to have anything to do with the church. You walked. And for years I was left saying that prayer along with my own.

Anyway, for years I would run the wheel at the fundraisers for Our Lady of the Snows church. I worked on its building campaigns. Even now I'm on two diocesan committees—the Priests' Retirement Fund and the Bishop's Financial Advisory Committee.

I recognize how blessed I've been in life and how much more fortunate we are than most people. We should probably give back more than we do. You know, in our family charity is a private thing. I don't know what you give or to what causes. But I don't think we have been too involved. I think maybe we haven't given enough. I guess I view a lot of charities as putting your finger in a hole in the dike when the whole dike is caving in. Then, too, you read things like eighty-five cents of your dollar goes to administration and it just turns you off.

I did get involved with public television here. Reno was receiving PBS on Channel Nine out of Sacramento, and then there was an effort through the university to start our own channel—Channel Five. Norm Nielsen at the Club Cal-Neva was real involved and you were pushing it, too. At first I wasn't interested; in fact I was against it because I thought Reno's channel couldn't possibly compete with Channel Nine. But then

I met Jim Pagliarini, the manager, and he changed my mind. So I gave him some money and I got Club Cal-Neva to donate a promotion through a huge, Big Bertha slot machine as part of their first fundraiser. Anyone who gave, say, fifty dollars got to pull the handle, and if they lined up a pay they got so many free meals at the Club Cal-Neva. If anyone hit a jackpot during the campaign they got to keep the machine. I've continued to give Channel Five money through the years, and helped them out with their building campaign. I think it's a helluva good organization. I watch a lot of public television.

So I'm not too keen on organized charity. I can't see where it is capable of solving the really big problems. I wouldn't give five cents for a lot of charities. I have always been more concerned for individuals, particularly the disadvantaged. In life you had better learn how to put yourself in the other guy's shoes and say, "There but for the grace go I."

Black people have had a pretty rough time in this town. I remember when we had Park Terrace and a nice woman came to look at an apartment. She said she and her husband wanted to rent it. Then she started to move in and her husband turned out to be black. We had some white families and some black families renting there, but we were afraid that both races might be upset with their new neighbors. So we told the woman and her husband that we couldn't rent to them. They were very nice about it and just went away. But I've often asked myself where could they have possibly gone?

When we had the Riverside it was impossible for a black entertainer to stay at the place. The Will Mastin trio sang for us, and then they had to go stay at a black boarding house on Montello Street. They couldn't stay at any hotel in Reno. Blacks couldn't play in most places, either. When we had the Riverside, a very classy black couple started shooting craps one Sunday morning. There probably weren't three other players in the place. We had a very suave southerner who was our pit boss. He went over to talk to them, and then they left. I asked him what he said: "Oh, I just thanked them for coming in, but told them

they couldn't stay since some of our white customers might object."

That's the way it was here in Reno. Blacks had to play at Bill Fong's New China Club or the Harlem Club. Both were off Lake Street along the tracks, right behind Nevada Novelty. I knew Bill real well. We had some equipment in his place. We got to be friendly with the Fongs; they would come to our house on Christmas Day. Bill later had the Chinese restaurant in the El Cortez.

We had a jukebox and some slots in the Harlem Club. The owners were black and they kept trying to educate me on what kind of music to bring them—soul or whatever. We had to take our equipment out because people kept breaking into it and stealing the money. I suspect that some of the blacks that I got to know around there were pimps and thieves. But they were sort of my friends, too. When they would see me on the street they would say, "Hi guy, how goes it?"

I know I've certainly given a lot of money to black men in the street in my life. I usually pick out a black man because he has so much against him in life. I'm talking about the old guys who are going through the dumpsters. I've known one man for years—whenever I see him I give him maybe twenty dollars. He takes it but never says anything. I help him because you know there are only so many garbage cans out there.

There were quite a few Indians around, too. The poor Indians couldn't go into the saloons; it was against the law to sell them liquor. But they would get people to buy it for them and they couldn't really handle it. On the Fourth of July they would march in the parade and the next day when I came to work there were drunken Indians lying around on the sidewalks and in the gutters. Sometimes I'd slip them five or ten dollars each so they could get out of town or washed up.

But in those days I didn't really think about the big picture. I mean, I wasn't a reformer or anything. I just felt sorry for those people lying in front of my place. I didn't give much thought to the position of blacks or Indians in society, or how we were

mistreating them. My horizon was limited—it just took in the individual.

So, anyway, I was pretty used to blacks and Indians. When we started the Club Cal-Neva they weren't allowed in the place. But then in the 1960s the civil rights movement began and things heated up. We heard rumors that some blacks planned a sit-in at the Club Cal-Neva. Warren came in with a pistol and said he would stop any troublemakers. I made him give it to me and I locked it in my desk.

About that time I read in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that one of the chapters of the Elks Club had refused admission to a professional person because he was black. My father had been an Elk and so was my brother Belmont. In Tonopah the Elks were a big deal. We were Catholics, so we couldn't join the Masons. Those were the two prestigious organizations while I was growing up.

When I came to Reno I decided to join the Elks. I remember telling your mother that if I died I needed six pallbearers and I wasn't too sure she could get them. I was only half kidding. The Elks took care of their own, and they provided some benefits to widows, too. I was initiated along with Stan Smith and Bill Raggio. The Reno Elks were the creme-de-la-creme. They used to have a prestigious annual dinner—Uncle Dan's Dinner—at Dan Wheeler's ranch south of town. It raised quite a bit of money for charity before there were things like the United Fund.

Anyway, when I read that article I cut it out and sent it with my letter of resignation to the Elks. I asked them to put them up on their bulletin board. I'm not sure if they did. I never heard from them again.

As I think back on those times I realize just how far non-whites have come in this country during my lifetime. This is certainly still a racist society—in some ways maybe the races are further apart than ever—but the blacks certainly have more opportunity today. In part that is due to the government. However, I think in general that government has become too big and intrusive. The politicians want to run every aspect of our lives. They have taken away a lot of the grounds for opportunity

and personal initiative in this country. There is too much Big Brother. I watch the congressional debates on C-SPAN and, frankly, they disappoint me. Sometimes I can't believe that those are the people that we let run this country. I'm not sure any longer whether I'm a Democrat or a Republican. I was always a Democrat, but I have come to feel that the Democrats want to give everything away. Bill Clinton is an interesting man. I might like to have him as my friend but not as my president.

As far as foreign policy goes, I don't agree at all when we poke our nose into other countries' business. Who made us the policeman of the world? Who asked? I was opposed to the Vietnam War from the beginning. For this country it was the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time and for the wrong reason. We were very arrogant to even get involved, and it cost us a lot.

Your brother David was in college before it became popular to protest the war. One day he told me that there was a group of students at UNR who were opposed to Vietnam. They wanted to bring in speakers and films, but they didn't have any money. I told David to put them in touch with me. I guess they were pretty suspicious. David said they drove by the house several times before they stopped.

I remember that this college guy, kind of an underground sort of person, would come down to the Club Cal-Neva to see me from time to time. He was organizing protests and I would give him money to help out. I was getting into arguments over Vietnam with businessmen, my stockbroker, people like that. Everyone seemed to be a warmonger. And then they killed those college kids in Ohio and the country began to wake up. We were split down the middle. We're still paying for that legacy. It pissed me off then and it still pisses me off just to think about it. Vietnam should serve as a big warning every time we think of sticking our nose in somewhere. So far we've been real lucky in Bosnia. Where would we have been by now if someone had blown up some American boys? Maybe back home with our tails between our legs or maybe stuck even deeper in the mud over there.

When I think about my own life, maybe the things that I could control, I have no regrets. I got into the gambling business when gambling was a necessity for this state. I couldn't get a job, so I went out and made one for myself. That's about all it amounted to at first—just wages.

While we're at this I want to say something on the record. You be sure and keep that tape recorder running. I remember that one Christmas you came home for the holidays from the University of Chicago. We were discussing your education there and your friends. You told me, "Well, you know when I talk to my professors and other people in the Midwest about my family and background, I tell them I'm from Nevada and that you're in the gambling business. They are very shocked. They look at me kind of funny, like maybe I was from another planet."

I was hurt by that, but then I got to thinking that maybe my son doesn't really understand why I'm in the gambling business. He's out there in a world in which gambling is frowned upon and he's reticent about his heritage. Well, I grew up in the West in a little mining town. In order to feed his family my father was in the mining business, and then it all slipped right out from under him. Silver went from a dollar to thirty-one cents an ounce, and our livelihood was running out. There wasn't anything for this young boy to do in a dying mining camp, and he couldn't afford a college education.

So when you were telling people that your father was in gaming, and they didn't approve, what everyone failed to understand was that I was *lucky* to even get into the business. It was an opportunity for me in a world without opportunity. I was able to make a living, a good one, and I wasn't breaking any laws.

Gaming is not the most noble human activity but it's not the worst one either. People are going to gamble no matter what; it's in their nature. The question is whether it can become a legitimate business, like here in Nevada, where you've got strong controls and the player is protected. On the whole Nevada's approach beats the alternatives.

Of course, Nevada faces very serious challenges and so do we. Gaming is spreading all over the world. I think if California ever legalizes casinos we are in deep trouble. Reno is obviously moving to a new level. Silver Legacy sets a new standard, and not one that most of us can afford to follow. I don't always agree with Don Carano, but I take my hat off to him for putting up so much money in this market at this time. In Reno today you are too small with anything less than 700 rooms.

Actually, my best experience in the gaming business was the twenty-five years that I was in the Club Cal-Neva. You know, there were some strong personalities in there—Leon, Warren, and I was no Milquetoast either. So we had our clashes. But I had some darn good partners. We respected and trusted one another, too. We all worked for the good of the place. In some partnerships you might have to worry about your partners stealing from you or having personal outside interests that could compete with the business. In the Club Cal-Neva that was never the case. As far as I was concerned, my partners there could count my money for me. In some ways we were lucky. We came along at the right time and stumbled into a good thing. You can overcome lots of mistakes and tension with good profits.

But the most important thing of all to me is the family. Your mother and I talk frequently about how lucky we are. We have four boys and none of them has ever been in jail; four boys each with a very different character. You each march to your own drummer, but we have a great deal of respect and love for each of you. You all seem to get along. It is a great source of pride to me that we work together. That's not true in every family.

Your mother and I have tried to be evenhanded with you boys. There were no pets. We always stay out of your affairs, and we try to spread our love around equally between your wives and our grandchildren. There have been three divorces in our family. That is always painful, but your mother and I continue to be on very good terms with your ex-wives. They call us a lot; we go out to dinner. Personally, I think the worst thing in life is bitterness. If you become bitter about anything the poison can just kill you. You become obsessed with the negative and it is

self-defeating. I don't think that there is much bitterness in our whole tribe. I hope not. We are very fortunate in life. We have had successes in business; not real big killings but some significant successes. So I have a sense of accomplishment.

When I was growing up I wanted to become a concert pianist. That's what I thought when I was seventeen. We had a piano and Gladys was taking lessons. My brother Lee had never had a lesson in his life, and he'd sit down at the piano and just start playing by ear. He couldn't even read music, but he was good. I would listen to him and think that was just marvelous. So I dreamed about becoming a concert pianist. Of course, I didn't have the slightest idea how much work and practice that would entail. My dream didn't last for very long.

Appendix

THE BIRTH OF CLUB CAL-NEVA

The following is a facsimile of Jack's early 1962 handwritten notes regarding the financial structure of the Club Cal-Neva and opening expenses:

Price	=	$1,300,000
Down Payment	=	$ 150,000
To pay off First National Mortgage	=	$ 80,000
Monthly payment to Franks' group	=	$ 10,000

We are borrowing $230,000 from Nevada Bank of Commerce ($80,000 to pay off existing mortgage and $150,000 to sellers for down payment). Total down payment is $230,000 payable at bank's option.

Finance:

From Partners	$120,000	
Loans from Partners	180,000	
Loan on Property	230,000	
	$530,000	Cash Available

	Percentages	
John Cavanaugh	14%	$ 60,000
Leon Nightingale	18%	60,000
Jack Douglass	14%	60,000
Howard Farris	10%	50,000
Warren Nelson	10%	50,000
Adrian Tolen	4%	20,000
	70%*	$300,000

(Cost to Farris, Nelson and Tolen $2,000 per point and $3,000 loan to operation per point. Douglass and Nightingale were enhanced for putting the deal together; Cavanaugh also enhanced *pari passu* with Douglass as his business partner).

* Subsequently, the partners were enhanced *pari passu* to the total of 100 percent ownership. Nightingale eventually owned 25 percent while Douglass and Cavanaugh each owned 20 percent. The remaining 35 percent was held by Farris, Nelson and Tolen.

Expenses

Down Payment	$230,000	
Licenses - City	20,600	
State	6,000	
County	6,600	
Federal	$ 10,937	
	$274,137	
Remodel	$ 25,000	
Contratto	21,000	
First month's rental	10,000	
Advertising	10,000	
Inventory (opening)	10,000	
	$ 76,000	
Miscellaneous	9,863	
Bankroll	170,000	
	$530,000	Total

We have licensed:	6	21 games
	2	craps
	1	wheel of fortune
	1	keno game
	175	slots (we have 200)

History of Contratto's Operation:

— 25 to 26% liquor cost always
— Overall nut $4,000 per day
— Averaged $20,000 per month in free drinks (last 3 months of operation totalled $40,000).
— Bar did $12,000 per month cash in the summer and $8,000 per month in the winter.
— Jimmy James distributed free drinks checks to motels; did good job.

Minimum Opening Costs—Casino

6	-	21 layouts	=	$ 138.60
2		craps "	=	246.40
1		wheel	=	130.00
		Padding	=	35.00
2		gross of cards	=	150.00
300		pair of dice*	=	450.00
				$1,160.00

* We will use an average of 9 pair (3 sets of 3 pair each) per 24 hours on #1 craps and 3 pair (1 set of 3 pair) per 24 hours on #2 craps—or 360 pair per month.

NOTES

Preface

1. Beltran Paris (as told to William A. Douglass), *Beltran, Basque Sheepman of the American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1979)

2. William A. Douglass, *An Interview with Joseph Mosconi: Reflections on Life in Truckee, Verdi, and Reno, 1900-1960s* (Reno: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1985)

3. Mead Dixon, Ken Adams and R. T. King, *Playing the Cards That Are Dealt: Mead Dixon, the Law, and Casino Gaming* (Reno: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1992)

Introduction

1. Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle* (New York: Pocket Books, 1964)

2. A. Alvarez, review of *Learning from Las Vegas*, by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *New York Times Review of Books*, 11 January 1996, 15.

3. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972). Frederick Jameson, in his seminal article "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (*New Left Review*, no. 146 [1984]: 54), employs the Venturi (et al.) study as his point of departure.

4. C. Elizabeth Raymond, *George Wingfield, Owner and Operator of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992)

5. Ibid., 193-195. Less known is the fact that 21 other states legalized horse racing as a revenue-raising strategy during the 1930s. Cf. Robert Goodman, *The Luck Business. The Devastating Consequences and Broken Promises of America's Gambling Explosion* (New York: The Free Press, Martin Kessler Books, 1995), 162

6. "Passion in the Desert," *Fortune* 9 (April 1934): 100

Chapter One

1. Twelve years Jack's senior. Norman Money's personal reminiscences have been edited and distributed privately by his granddaughter, Ramona Ruiz O'Neil, with the title of "Poker Bill and Mary Ann and Other Mining Tales: Recollections of Norman Douglass Money" (1993), MS.

2. Eleven years older than Jack.

3. The Robb family moved to Tonopah in 1904. In addition to running a blacksmith shop Dan served briefly as Nye County sheriff and served three terms in the Nevada State Legislature as an assemblyman in Nye County.

4. In 1910, or the year Jack was born, Ray Robb was 22 years old, Muriel was 20, Blanche was 19, Thurman was 11 and Ethel was seven.

5. Bridget McQuillan died on March 8, 1915 at 82 years of age. Her obituary lists her birthplace as simply "Ireland." It noted that she married Bernard in Placerville and that the family moved to Nevada in 1872 (*Tonopah Daily Bonanza*, 8 March 1915).

6. Bernard McQuillan died on July 16, 1917. According to one obituary he was born in Carickmacross, County Monaghan, Ireland in 1831. He emigrated to New York at 21 years of age where he had a sister. From there he went to Wisconsin where he lived until just before the outbreak of the Civil War. He journeyed by way of the Isthmus of Panama to San Francisco and then on to the diggings. After he married in Placerville at age 32 he returned to San Francisco. News of the Comstock Lode attracted him there. He was "a pioneer of Virginia City and enjoyed a personal acquaintance with all the bonanza kings and saw all the big deals on the Comstock executed" [quite unlikely, since the 1880 census listed him as an out-of-work, illiterate miner]. In 1896 he returned to Grass Valley briefly, and went from there to Silver Star [Douglass Camp]. In 1902 he settled in Tonopah (*Tonopah Daily*

Bonanza, 17 July 1917). According to another obituary he married at age 30 in Placerville after having come to California in a prairie schooner! This account is clearly less credible since it also had the McQuillan family residing in Virginia City until 1902, when it resettled in Tonopah (*Tonopah Daily Times*, 17 July 1917).

7. Leasers were men who went into existing, closed mines to work the nearly exhausted ore bodies on a share basis. It was a scavenging operation that usually afforded a precarious living at best, although there was always the hope that one could hit a new ore pocket. From the mine owner's viewpoint it provided some income without a miners' payroll.

8. Norman Money speaks of two Indian women who were named after Billy Douglass's first wife, Mary McQuillan. One—Indian Mary Ann—also bore the middle name of Margaret Ann Douglass—Billy's sister. Indian Mary served in the McQuillan, Robb and Douglass households (before Jack was born). She taught weaving and beadwork techniques to Gladys Douglass, Ethel Robb, Edith Fottler and Norman's sister Vivian ("Poker Bill and Mary Ann . . . , " p. 89).

9. Norman Money claims that the Douglass family placed itself at risk by trying to hide Chinese from anti-Chinese mobs (p. 53). He also remembers his grandmother, Bridget Murphy, saying "God bless Tuscarora!" She was referring to that town's willingness to accept castoff Chinese railroad construction workers (p. 58).

10. A December 16, 1911 letter from Cal Brougher to Ed Erickson states,

> Tell Billy [Douglass] that I will have a meeting with [Borax] Smith, Zabriskie and Edwards next Monday in regard to the Santa Rosa property.

(Letter in possession of Robert Douglass.)

11. Ben Edwards was Billy's close friend from the time when both lived in Candelaria. They were partners in the Tonopah Extension Mining and Milling Company, incorporated in 1901. Cf. Lorena Edwards Meadows, *A Sagebrush Heritage* (San Jose: Harlan-Young Press, 1972), 155-156. Ben and Billy were also Frank Golden's partners in ownership of the Golden Building in Tonopah (Ibid., 199).

12. For a full treatment of Jack Longstreet cf. Sally Zanjani, *Jack Longstreet, Last of the Desert Frontiersmen* (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1988).

13. Charlotte Stimler was the daughter of Henry Philip Stimler of Illinois. He was a schoolteacher, storekeeper, judge and miner at

different times in his life. It is therefore likely that Lottie was well-educated. Cf. William A. Douglass and Robert A. Nylen, eds., *Letters from the Nevada Frontier. Correspondence of Tasker L. Oddie, 1898-1902* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 344n

14. Harry Stimler's account was published (no author listed) as *The True Story of the Discovery of Goldfield* (Carson City: Nevada Press, circa 1906), in part as a promotional piece for his mining stock brokerage business. It notes that Tom Kendall and Jim Butler were the first to grubstake Stimler and Marsh, but ultimately gave up on them. It was then that William Douglass and Harry Ramsey each put up $40 and Senator Nixon and George Wingfield also became involved (p. 19). The account ends as follows:

> The return to Messrs. Nixon and Wingfield, who put $1,200 into the enterprise which resulted in Goldfield, has been the handsome sum of $500,000; to Wm. Douglass, whose advance did not exceed $530, $100,000; to Thomas Kendall . . . , on an advance of $320, the sum of $160,000; . . . to James Butler . . . , the sum of $40,000 . . . this munificent return was for a bale of hay and a couple of sacks of grain which he originally put into the outfit; to Harry Ramsey, who put up $250, the sum of $45,000. (p. 30)

15. Mining at Gabbs has focused upon manganese.

16. On the way to the title Tonopah High defeated Lovelock 26-23 (*Reno Evening Gazette*, 8 March 1929), Carson City 16-15 (Ibid., 9 March 1929), and Winnemucca 20-12 (Ibid., 11 March 1929).

17. Norman Money notes,

> My Uncle Billy Douglass, having found the silver croppings [at Douglass Camp] was . . . still a young man. And while this was his first time in the money, during his mining career he would come into numerous small fortunes but was too generous a giver, too liberal a lender and too much of a gambler to accumulate anything of a lasting financial status. It was said that while Crooker, Cook and Wingfield had money to burn, Billy Douglass had burned his fuel for charities, help to friends and care for relatives. Bill Booth of the Bonanza was to remind me, "Your Uncle Will has spent more money foolishly than most mining men have made." (p. 37)

Chapter Two

1. Robert Merriman would later garner considerable fame as a commanding officer of the international force known as the Lincoln Brigade which fought in the Spanish Civil War. He was missing in action. For an account of his life see Marion S. Merriman and Warren Lerude, *American Commander in Spain* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1986).

Chapter Three

1. Jack Douglass has in his possession a ledger book for the operation of Nevada Novelty Company between 1938 and 1942 (inclusive). A loose-leaf note in it lists the money credited to each of the partners as of the commencement date of the business (April 27, 1936). Jack owned no equipment outright, but the partnership bought some machines and Jack was credited with their fills (referred to as their "priming"). Jack's credits were as follows:

April 29, 1936	Tonopah	
5¢ [slot machine]	B and R Club	$10.00
5¢ "	Curley's	10.00
5¢ "	Drug Store	10.00
5¢ "	Chas. Stewart	10.00
May 1, 1936	Hawthorne	
5¢ & 25¢ [slot machines]	Jerry's	35.00
5¢ & 10¢ "	Dick Pledge	25.00
May 5, 1936	Tonopah	
10¢ [slot machine]	David's	15.00

In addition Jack traded in his Ford truck on a new vehicle and was credited $225.00. He also paid "Happy" $32.00 for hauling some jukeboxes and bought phonograph records in the amount of $9.50 from Rogers. Jack paid $15.00 for a car heater and was credited $10.00 for a marble game. Jack's total investment was $406.50 while Louie Benetti was credited with $5821.00.

2. Reference is to the famed Liberty Bell machine, one of which was stolen from a Powell Street saloon in 1905 and then "mysteriously surfaced" at the Mills Novelty Plant in Chicago. Cf. Marshall Fey, *Slot Machines: A Pictorial History of the First 100 Years of the World's Most Popular Coin-operated Gaming Device* (Reno, Nev.: Liberty Belle Books, 1991), 42

Chapter Four

1. In September of 1936 Louie was paid $1,000 out of the company. By the following September he was owed $4414.50. In January of 1938 he received $1500, leaving a balance of $2914.50. By 1938 Louie and Jack were each drawing a salary of $150 monthly. (Nevada Novelty Company ledger, 1938-1942)

2. According to the ledger in 1938 the gross income for Nevada Novelty was $22,220.16. Louie and Jack were doing all of the work. In September 1941 they increased their salaries to $225 monthly. That year gross revenues were $37,886.11. In September of 1939 they had their first dividend ($1,000 each). As business picked up during the early war years they invested heavily in equipment. It was not until December 1941 that they declared their second dividend ($2,000 each). By then they also had $11,366.49 loaned out to bar operators and were writing off $1,267.95 in "uncollectable" bad debt. In 1942 the business took off. In June the partners increased their salaries to $300 monthly. In August they hired their first employee—Ross Fulton. In October Louie and Jack each received $3,000 dividend from the company. Nevada Novelty Company grossed $70,513.68 in 1942. Obviously, 1943 was a banner year if Jack and Louie increased their salaries to $750 monthly. Jack entered the army on December 14, 1943.

Chapter Seven

1. For a more extensive discussion of the Contratto-Franks-Nightingale partnership see Dixon, 95-100.

2. The "Red-line" limited new casinos to a restricted area of the downtown. The southern boundary was Second Street and the Cal-Neva was on the wrong side of it for automatic inclusion in the new gaming district.

3. Dr. William Kennett, a physician in the Bay Area, is the father of Carol Douglass, who is married to Jack's second eldest son, John. Dr. Kennett's mother once owned the Mizpah Hotel in Tonopah.

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